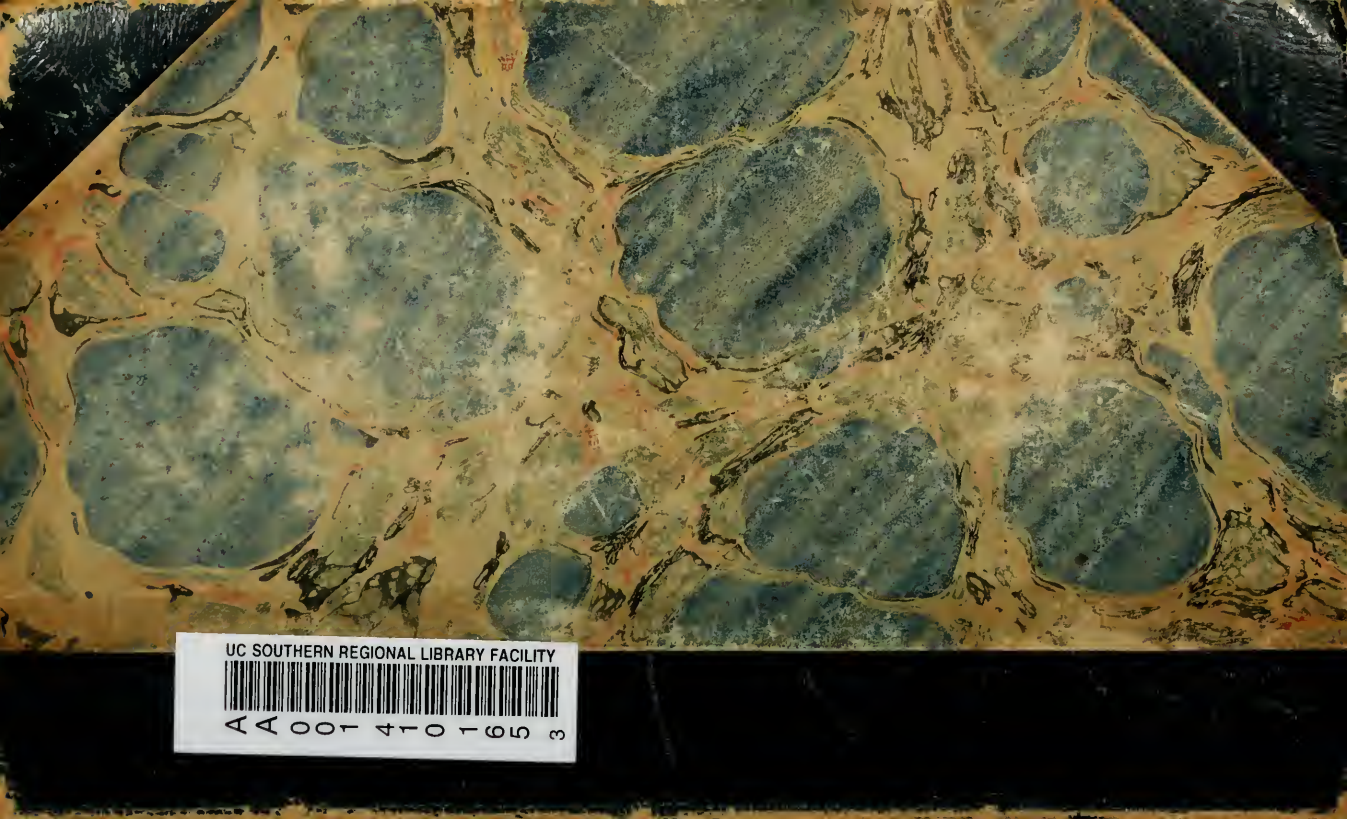
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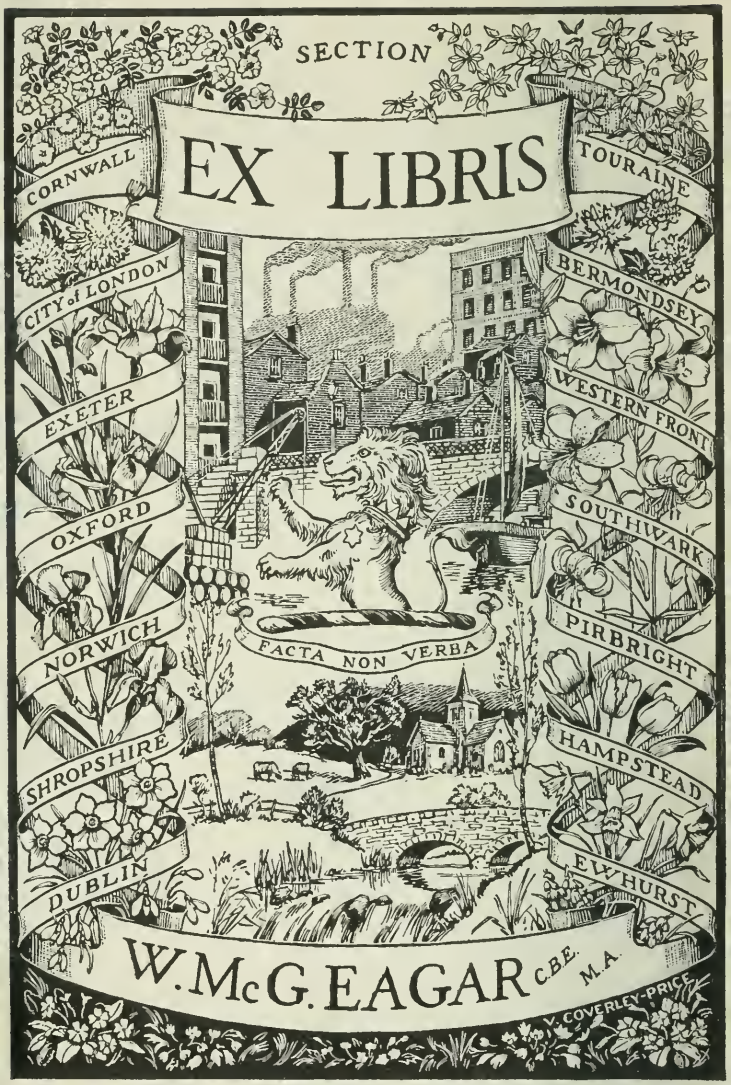
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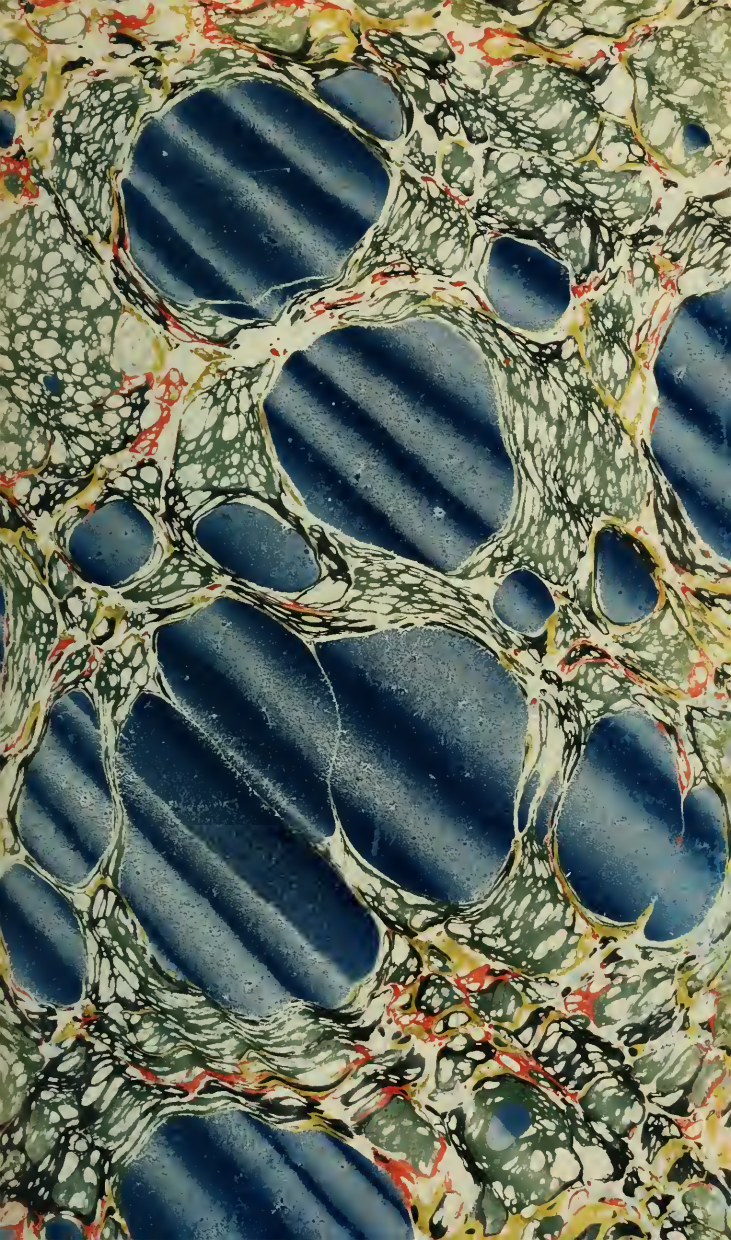

MEMOIRS

OF

JOHN DRYDEN.

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PARIS:

PUBLISHED BY A. AND W. GALIGNANI,

AT THE ENGLISH, FRENCH, ITALIAN, GERMAN, AND SPANISH LIBRARY,
N°. 18, RUE VIVIENNE.

MDCCCXXVI.

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THE

LIFE

OF

JOHN DRYDEN.

SECTION VI.

Threnodia Augustalis—Albion and Albanius—Dryden becomes a Catholic—The Controversy of Dryden with Stillingfleet—The Hind and Panther—Life of St Francis Xavier—Consequences of the Revolution to Dryden—Don Sebastian—King Arthur—Cleomenes—Love Triumphant.

THE accession of James II. to the British throne excited new hopes in all orders of men. On the accession of a new prince, the loyal looked to rewards, the rebellious to amnesty. The catholics exulted in beholding one of their persuasion attain the crown after an interval of two centuries; the church of England expected the fruits of her unlimited devotion to the royal line; even the sectaries might hope

indulgence from a prince, whose religion deviated from that established by law as widely as their own. All, therefore, hastened, in sugared addresses, to lament the sun which had set, and hail the beams of that which had arisen. Dryden, among other expectants, chose the more honourable of these themes; and in the «*Threnodia Augustalis*,» at once paid a tribute to the memory of the deceased monarch, and decently solicited the attention of his successor. But although he had enjoyed personal marks of the favour of Charles, they were of a nature too unsubstantial to demand a deep tone of sorrow. «Little was the muses' hire, and light their gain;» and «the pension of a prince's praise» is stated to have been all their encouragement. Dryden, therefore, by no means sorrowed as if he had no hope; but, having said all that was decently mournful over the bier of Charles, tuned his lyrics to a sounding close in praise of James.

About the same time Dryden resumed, with new courage, the opera of «Albion and Albanius,» which had been nearly finished before the death of Charles. This was originally designed as a masque, or emblematical prelude to the play of «King Arthur;» for Dryden, wearied with the inefficient patronage of Charles, from whom he only «received fair words,» had renounced in despair the task of an epic poem, and had converted one of his

themes, that of the tale of Arthur, into the subject of a romantic drama. As the epic was to have been adapted to the honour and praise of Charles and his brother, the opera had originally the same political tendency. «Albion and Albanius» was a sort of introductory masque, in which, under a very thin veil of allegory, first, the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne, and, secondly, their escape from the Rye-house plot, and the recent conquest over their Whig opponents, were successively represented. The death of Charles made little alteration in this piece: it cost but the addition of an apotheosis; and the opera concluded with the succession of James to the throne, from which he had been so nearly excluded. These topics were however temporary; and, probably from the necessity of producing it while the allusions were fresh and obvious, «Albion and Albanius» was detached from «King Arthur,» which was not in such a state of forwardness. Great expense was bestowed in bringing forward this piece, and the scenery seems to have been unusually perfect; particularly, the representation of a celestial phenomenon, actually seen by Captain Gunman of the navy, whose evidence is quoted in the printed copies of the play.[1] The music of «Albion

[1] It formed the machine on which Iris appeared. I have been favoured by Sir Egerton Brydges with the following «Extract from the Journal of Captain Christopher Gun-

and Albanius» was arranged by Grabut, a Frenchman, whose name does not stand high as a composer. Yet Dryden pays him some compliments in the preface of the piece, which were considered as derogatory to Purcell and the English school, and gave great offence to a class of persons at least as irritable as their brethren the poets. This, among other causes, seems to have injured the success of the piece. But its death-blow was the news of the Duke of Monmouth's invasion, which reached London on Saturday 13th June, 1685, while «Albion and Albanius» was performing for the sixth time: the audience broke up in consterna-

man, commander of his Royal Highness's yacht the Mary, lying in Calais pier, Tuesday, 18th March:

«1683—4,

«March 18th. It was variable cloudy weather: this morning about seven o'clock saw in the firmament three suns, with two demi-rainbows; and all within one whole rainbow. The sun towards the left hand bore east, and that on the right hand bore south-east of me. I did sit and draw it as well as the time and place would permit me; for it was seen in its full form about the space of half an hour; but part of the rainbow did see above two hours. It appeared first at three quarters past six, and was overclouded at a quarter past seven. The wind north-by-west.»

Mr Gunman, the descendant of the captain, has lately had a picture on the subject painted by Serres, the marine painter; which makes an interesting history-piece. It represents the phenomenon in the heavens—the harbour of Calais—and the yacht lying off it, etc. etc.

tion, and the piece was never again repeated.[1] This opera was prejudicial to the company, who were involved by the expense in a considerable debt, and never recovered half the money laid out. Neither was it of service to

[1] This tradition is thus critically examined and proved by Mr Malone:

«From a letter written by King James to the Prince of Orange, June 15, 1685, it appears, that though the Duke of Monmouth landed at Lyme, in Dorsetshire, on Thursday evening, June 11th, an account of his landing did not reach the King at Whitehall till *Saturday* morning the 13th. The House of Commons, having met on that day at the usual hour, between nine and ten o'clock, the news was soon afterwards communicated to them by a Message from the King, delivered by the Earl of Middleton (to whom Etheredge afterwards wrote two poetical Epistles from Ratisbon).—Having voted and drawn up an Address to his Majesty, desiring him to take care of his royal person, they adjourned to *four o'clock;* in which interval they went to Whitehall, presented their Address, and then met again.—*Com. Jour.* vol. IX. p. 735. About this time, therefore, it may be presumed, the news transpired, and in an hour afterwards probably reached the theatre, where an audience was assembled at the representation of the opera of «Albion and Albanius;» for plays at that time began at four o'clock. It seems from Mr Luttrell's MS. note, that the first representation of this opera was on Saturday the 6th of June; and Downes (*Rosc. Ang.* p. 40.) says, that in consequence of Monmouth's invasion, it was only performed *six* times; so that the sixth representation was, without doubt, on Saturday, the 13th of June. An examination of dates is generally fatal to tales of this kind: here, however, they certainly support the tradition mentioned in the text.»—*Life of Dryden*, vol. II. p. 4.

our poet's reputation, who had, on this occasion, to undergo the gibes of angry musicians, as well as the reproaches of disappointed actors and hostile poets. One went so far as to suggest, with some humour, that probably the laureat and Grabut had mistaken their trade; the former writing the music, and the latter the verse.

We have now reached a remarkable incident in our author's life, namely, his conversion to the Catholic faith, which took place shortly after the accession of James II. to the British throne. The biographer of Dryden must feel considerable difficulty in discussing the probable causes of this change. Although this essay be intended to contain the life, not the apology of the poet, it is the duty of the writer to place such circumstances in view, as may qualify the strong prepossession at first excited by a change of faith against the individual who makes it. This prepossession, powerful in every case, becomes doubly so, if the step be taken at a time when the religion adopted seems more readily to pave the way for the temporal prosperity of the proselyte. Even where the grounds of conviction are ample and undeniable, we have a respect for those who suffer, rather than renounce a mistaken faith, when it is discountenanced or persecuted. A brave man will least of all withdraw himself from his ancient standard

when the tide of battle beats against it. On the other hand, those who at such a period admit conviction to the better and predominant doctrine, are viewed with hatred by the members of the deserted creed, and with doubt by their new brethren in faith. Many who adopted Christianity in the reign of Constantine were doubtless sincere proselytes, but we do not find that any of them have been canonized. These feelings must be allowed powerfully to affect the mind, when we reflect that Dryden, a servant of the court, and zealously attached to the person of James, to whom he looked for the reward of long and faithful service, did not receive any mark of royal favour until he professed himself a member of the religion for which that king was all but an actual martyr. There are other considerations, however, greatly qualifying the conclusions which might be drawn from these suspicious circumstances, and tending to show, that Dryden's conversion was at least in a great measure effected by sincere conviction. The principal clue to the progress of his religious principles is to be found in the poet's own lines in «The Hind and the Panther;» and may, by a very simple commentary, be applied to the state of his religious opinions at different periods of his life :

« My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires;
My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,

Follow'd false lights; and, when their glimpse was gone,
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am;
Be thine the glory, and be mine the shame!»

The «vain desires» of Dryden's «thoughtless youth» require no explanation: they obviously mean, that inattention to religious duties which the amusements of youth too frequently occasion. The «false lights» which bewildered the poet's manhood were, I doubt not, the puritanical tenets, which, coming into the world under the auspices of his fanatical relations, Sir Gilbert Pickering and Sir John Driden, he must have at least professed, but probably seriously entertained. It must be remembered, that the poet was thirty years of age at the Restoration; so that a considerable space of his full-grown manhood had passed while the rigid doctrines of the fanatics were still the order of the day. But the third state of his opinions, those «sparkles which his pride struck out,» after the delusions of puritanism had vanished; in other words, those sentiments which he imbibed after the Restoration, and which immediately preceded his adoption of the Catholic faith, cannot be ascertained without more minute investigation. We may at the outset be easily permitted to assume, that the adoption of a fixed creed of religious principles was not the first business of our author, when that merry period set him free from

the rigorous fetters of fanaticism. Unless he differed more than we can readily believe from the public feeling at that time, Dryden was satisfied to give to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, without being in a hurry to fulfil the counterpart of the precept. Foremost in the race of pleasure, engaged in labours alien from serious reflection, the favourite of the most lively and dissolute nobility whom England ever saw, religious thoughts were not, at this period, likely to intrude frequently upon his mind, or to be encouraged when they did so. The time, therefore, when Dryden began seriously to compare the doctrines of the contending sects of Christianity, was probably several years after the Restoration, when reiterated disappointment, and satiety of pleasure, prompted his mind to retire within itself, and think upon hereafter. The « *Religio Laici*, » published in 1682, evinces, that, previous to composing that poem, the author had bestowed serious consideration upon the important subjects of which it treats; and I have postponed the analysis of it to this place, in order that the reader may be able to form his own conjecture from what faith Dryden changed when he became a Catholic.

The « *Religio Laici* » has indeed a political tendency, being written to defend the church of England against the sectaries : it is not, therefore, so much from the conclusions of the

piece, as from the mode of the author's deducing these conclusions, that Dryden's real opinions may be gathered;—as we learn nothing of the bowl's bias from its having reached its mark, though something may be conjectured by observing the course which it described in attaining it. From many minute particulars, I think it almost decisive that Dryden, when he wrote the «*Religio Laici*,» was sceptical concerning revealed religion. I do not mean, that his doubts were of that fixed and permanent nature, which have at different times induced men, of whom better might have been hoped, to pronounce themselves free-thinkers on principle. On the contrary, Dryden seems to have doubted with such a strong wish to believe, as, accompanied with circumstances of extrinsic influence, led him finally into the opposite extreme of credulity. His view of the doctrines of Christianity, and of its evidence, were such as could not legitimately found him in the conclusions he draws in favour of the Church of England; and accordingly, in adopting them, he evidently stretches his complaisance towards the national religion, while perhaps in his heart he was even then disposed to think there was no middle course between natural religion and the church of Rome. The first creed which he examines is that of Deism; which he rejects, because the worship of one sole deity was not known to

the philosophers of antiquity, and is therefore obviously to be ascribed to revelation. Revelation thus proved, the puzzling doubt occurs, whether the scripture, as contended by Calvinists, was to be the sole rule of faith, or whether the rules and traditions of the church are to be admitted in explanation of the holy text. Here Dryden does not hesitate to point out the inconveniences ensuing from making the sacred page the subject of the dubious and contradictory commentary of the laity at large: when

> « The common rule was made the common prey,
> And at the mercy of the rabble lay;
> The tender page with horny fists was gall'd,
> And he was gifted most that loudest bawl'd;
> The spirit gave the doctoral degree,
> And every member of a company
> Was of his trade and of the Bible free. »

This was the rule of the sectaries,—of those whose innovations seemed, in the eyes of the Tories, to be again bursting in upon monarchy and episcopacy with the strength of a land-flood. Dryden, therefore, at once, and heartily, reprobates it. But the opposite extreme of admitting the authority of the church as omnipotent in deciding all matters of faith, he does not give up with the same readiness. The extreme convenience, nay, almost necessity, for such authority, is admitted in these remarkable lines:

« Such an omniscient church we *wish* indeed;
'*Twere worth both Testaments, cast in the Creed.*»

A wish, so forcibly expressed, shows a strong desire on the part of the poet to be convinced of the existence of that authority to which he so ardently desired to submit himself. And the argument which Dryden considers as conclusive against the existence of such an omniscient church, is precisely that which a subtle Catholic would find little trouble in repelling. If there be such a church, says Dryden, why does it not point out the corruption of the canon, and restore it where lost? The answer is obvious, providing that the infallibility of the church be previously assumed; for where can be the necessity of restoring or explaining scripture, if God has given to Pope and council the inspiration necessary to settle all doubts in matters of faith? Dryden must have perceived where this argument led him, and he rather compounds with the difficulty than faces it. The scripture, he admits, must be the rule on the one hand; but, on the other, it was to be qualified by the traditions of the earlier ages, and the exposition of learned men. And he concludes, boldly enough:

« Shall I speak plain, and, in a nation free,
Assume an honest layman's liberty?
I think, according to my little skill,
To my own mother-church submitting still,

That many have been saved, and many may,
Who never heard this question brought in play.
The unletter'd Christian, who believes in gross,
Plods on to heaven, and ne'er is at a loss;
For the strait gate would be made straiter yet,
Were none admitted there but men of wit.»

This seems to be a plain admission, that the author was involved in a question from which he saw no very decided mode of extricating himself; and that the best way was to think as little as possible upon the subject. But this was a sorry conclusion for affording firm foundation in religious faith.

Another doubt appears to have puzzled Dryden so much, as to lead him finally to the Catholic faith for its solution. This was the future fate of those who never heard the gospel preached, supposing belief in it essential to salvation :

« Because a general law is that alone,
Which must to all, and every where, be known »

Dryden, it is true, founds upon the mercy of the Deity a hope, that the benefit of the propitiatory sacrifice of our Mediator may be extended to those who knew not of its power. But the creed of St Athanasius stands in the poet's road; and though he disposes of it with less reverence to the patriarch than is quite seemly, there is an indecision, if not in his conclusion, at least in his mode of deducing it,

that shows an apt inclination to cut the knot, and solve the objection of the Deist, by alleging, that belief in the Christian religion is an essential requisite to salvation.

If I am right in these remarks, it will follow, that Dryden never could be a firm or steady believer in the Church of England's doctrines. The arguments, by which he proved them, carried him too far; and when he commenced a teacher of faith, or when, as he expresses it, « his pride struck out new sparkles of its own,» at that very time, while in words he maintained the doctrines of his mother-church, his conviction really hovered between natural religion and the faith of Rome. It is remarkable, that his friends do not seem to have considered the « *Religio Laici*» as expressive of his decided sentiments; for Charles Blount, a noted free-thinker, in consequence of that very work, wrote a deistical treatise in prose, bearing the same title, and ascribed it with great testimony of respect to « his much-honoured friend, John Dryden, Esquire.» [1] Mr Blount, living in close habits

[1] The expressions in the dedication are such as to preclude all idea but of profound respect: « Sir, The value I have ever had for your writings makes me impatient to peruse all treatises that are crowned with your name: whereof, the last that fell into my hands was your '*Religio Laici;*' which expresses as well your great judgment in, as value for, religion: a thing too rarely

with Dryden, must have known perfectly well how to understand his polemical poem; and, had he supposed it was written under a deep belief of the truth of the English creed, can it be thought he would have inscribed to the author a tract against all revelation?[1] The inference is, therefore, sufficiently plain, that the dedicator knew that Dryden was sceptical on the subject, on which he had, out of compliment to church and state, affected a conviction; and that his « *Religio Laici*» no more inferred a belief in the doctrines of Christianity, than the sacrifice of a cock to Esculapius proved the heathen philosopher's faith in the existence of that divine leech. Thus far Dryden had certainly proceeded. His disposition to believe in Christianity was obvious, but he was bewildered in the maze of doubt in which he was involved; and it was already plain, that the church, whose promises to illuminate him were most confident, was likely to have the

found in this age among gentlemen of your parts; and, I am confident (with the blessing of God upon your endeavours), not unlikely to prove of great advantage to the public; since, as Mr Herbert well observes,

«A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.»

[1] Blount preserves, indeed, that affectation of respect for the doctrines of the established church which decency imposes; but the tendency of his work is to decry all revelation. It is founded on the noted work of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, « *De Veritate.* »

honour of this distinguished proselyte. Dryden did not, therefore, except in outward profession, abandon the Church of England for that of Rome, but was converted to the Catholic faith from a state of infidelity, or rather of Pyrrhonism. This is made more clear by his own words, from which it appears that, having once admitted the mysterious doctrines of the Trinity and of redemption, so incomprehensible to human reason, Dryden felt no right to make any further appeal to that fallible guide :

> « Good life be now my task; my doubts are done;
> What more could fright my faith than three in one?
> Can I believe Eternal God could lie
> Disguised in mortal mould, and infancy?
> That the great Maker of the world could die?
> And after that trust my imperfect sense,
> Which calls in question his omnipotence? »

From these lines it may be safely inferred, that Dryden's sincere acquiescence in the more abstruse points of Christianity did not long precede his adoption of the Roman faith. In some preceding verses it appears how eagerly he received the conviction of the church's infallibility, as affording that guide, the want of whom he had in some degree lamented in the « *Religio Laici* : »

> « What weight of ancient witness can prevail,
> If private reason hold the public scale?

But, gracious God, how well dost thou provide
For erring judgments an unerring guide!
Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light,
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
O teach me to believe thee, thus conceal'd,
And search no farther than thyself reveal'd;
But her alone for my director take,
Whom thou hast promised never to forsake!»

We find, therefore, that Dryden's conversion was not of that sordid kind which is the consequence of a strong temporal interest; for he had expressed intelligibly the imagined *desiderata* which the church of Rome alone pretends to supply, long before that temporal interest had an existence. Neither have we to reproach him, that, grounded and rooted in a pure Protestant creed, he was foolish enough to abandon it for the more corrupted doctrines of Rome. He did not unloose from the secure haven to moor in the perilous road; but, being tossed on the billows of uncertainty, he dropped his anchor in the first moorings to which the winds, waves, and perhaps an artful pilot, chanced to convey his bark. We may indeed regret that, having to chuse between two religions, he should have adopted that which our education, reason, and even prepossessions, combine to point out as foully corrupted from the primitive simplicity of the Christian church. But neither the Protestant Christian, nor the sceptic philosopher, can

claim a right to despise the sophistry which bewildered the judgment of Chillingworth, or the toils which enveloped the active and suspicious minds of Bayle and of Gibbon. The latter, in his account of his own conversion to the Catholic faith, fixes upon the very arguments pleaded by Dryden, as those which appeared to him irresistible. The early traditions of the church, the express words of the text, are referred to by both as the grounds of their conversion; and the works of Bossuet, so frequently referred to by the poet, were the means of influencing the determination of the philosopher.[1] The victorious argument to

[1] « I was unable to resist the weight of historical evidence, that within the same period most of the leading doctrines of popery were already introduced in theory and practice; nor was my conclusion absurd, that miracles are the test of truth, and that the church must be orthodox and pure, which was so often approved by the visible interposition of the Deity. The marvellous tales which are so boldly attested by the Basils and Chrysostoms, the Austins and Jeroms, compelled me to embrace the superior merits of celibacy, the institution of the monastic life, the use of the sign of the Cross, of holy oil, and even of images, the invocation of saints, the worship of reliques, the rudiments of purgatory in prayers for the dead, and the tremendous mystery of the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, which insensibly swelled into the prodigy of transubstantiation. In these dispositions, and already more than half a convert, I formed an unlucky intimacy with a young gentleman of our college, whose name I shall spare. With a character less reso-

which Chillingworth himself yielded, was, « that there must be somewhere an infallible judge, and the Church of Rome is the only Christian society, which either does or can pretend to that character. »

It is also to be observed, that towards the end of Charles II.'s reign, the High-Churchmen and the Catholics regarded themselves as on

lute, Mr **** had imbibed the same religious opinions; and some Popish books, I know not through what channel, were conveyed into his possession. I read, I applauded, I believed; the English translations of two famous works of Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, the 'Exposition of the Catholic Doctrine,' and the 'History of the Protestant Variations,' achieved my conversion; and I surely fell by a noble hand. I have since examined the originals with a more discerning eye, and shall not hesitate to pronounce, that Bossuet is indeed a master of all the weapons of controversy. In the 'Exposition,' a specious apology, the orator assumes, with consummate art, the tone of candour and simplicity; and the ten-horned monster is transformed, at his magic touch, into the milk-white hind, who must be loved as soon as she is seen. In the 'History,' a bold and well-aimed attack, he displays, with a happy mixture of narrative and argument, the faults and follies, the changes and contradictions of our first reformers; whose variations (as he dexterously contends) are the mark of historical error, while the perpetual unity of the Catholic church is the sign and test of infallible truth. To my present feelings, it seems incredible, that I should ever believe that I believed in transubstantiation. But my conqueror oppressed me with the sacramental words, '*Hoc est corpus meum*,' and dashed against each other the figurative half-meanings of the Protestant sects; every objection was

the same side in political questions, and not greatly divided in their temporal interests. Both were sufferers in the Plot; both were enemies of the sectaries; both were adherents of the Stuarts. Alternate conversion had been common between them, so early as since Milton made a reproach to the English universities of the converts to the Roman faith daily made within their colleges; of those sheep,

> ——«Whom the grim wolf with privy paw
> Daily devours apace and nothing said.»

In approaching Dryden, therefore, a Catholic priest had to combat few of those personal prejudices which, in other cases, have been impediments to their making converts. The poet had, besides, before him the example of many persons both of rank and talent, who had adopted the Catholic religion.

Such being the disposition of Dryden's mind, and such the peculiar facilities of the Roman churchmen in making proselytes, it is by no means to be denied, that circumstances

resolved into omnipotence; and, after repeating at St Mary's the Athanasian creed, I humbly acquiesced in the mystery of the real presence.

«To take up half on trust, and half to try,
Name it not faith, but bungling bigotry.
Both knave and fool, the merchant we may call,
To pay great sums, and to compound the small;
For who would break with heaven, and would not break for all?»

GIBBON'S *Memoirs of his own Life.*

in the poet's family and situation strongly forwarded his taking such a step. His wife, Lady Elizabeth, had for some time been a Catholic; and though she may be acquitted of any share in influencing his determination, yet her new faith necessarily brought into his family persons both able and disposed to do so. His eldest and best beloved son, Charles, is also said, though upon uncertain authority, to have been a Catholic before his father, and to have contributed to his change.[1] Above all, James, his master, to whose fortunes he had so closely attached himself, had now become as parsimonious of his favour as his church is of salvation, and restricted it to those of his own sect. It is more than probable, though only a conjecture, that Dryden might be made the subject of those private exhortations, which in that reign were called *closeting;* and, predisposed as he was, he could hardly be supposed capable of resisting the royal eloquence. For, while pointing out circumstances of proof, that Dryden's conversion was not made by manner of bargain and sale, but proceeded upon a sincere though erroneous conviction, it cannot be de-

[1] In a libel in the «State Poems,» Dryden is made to say,

> « One son turn'd me, I turn'd the other two,
> But had not an indulgence, sir, like you. »

nied, that his situation as poet-laureat, and his expectations from the king, must have conduced to his taking his final resolution. All I mean to infer from the above statement is, that his interest and internal conviction led him to the same conclusion.

If we are to judge of Dryden's sincerity in his new faith, by the determined firmness with which he retained it through good report and bad report, we must allow him to have been a martyr, or at least a confessor, in the Catholic cause. If, after the Revolution, like many greater men, he had changed his principles with the times, he was not a person of such mark as to be selected from all the nation, and punished for former tenets. Supported by the friendship of Rochester, and most of the Tory nobles who were active in the Revolution, of Leicester, and many Whigs, and especially of the Lord-Chamberlain Dorset, there would probably have been little difficulty in permitting so eminent an author to remain poet-laureat, if he had recanted the errors of popery. But the Catholic religion, and the consequent disqualifications, were an insurmountable obstacle to his holding that or any other office under government; and Dryden's adherence to it, with all the poverty, reproach, and even persecution which followed the profession, argued a deep and substantial conviction of

the truth of the doctrines it inculcated. So late as 1699, when a union, in opposition to King William, had led the Tories and Whigs to look on each other with some kindness, Dryden thus expresses himself in a letter to his cousin, Mrs Steward: «The court rather speaks kindly of me, than does any thing for me, though they promise largely; and perhaps they think I will advance as they go backward, in which they will be much deceived: for I can never go an inch beyond my conscience and my honour. If they will consider me as a man who has done my best to improve the language, and especially the poetry, and will be content with my acquiescence under the present government, and forbearing satire on it, that I can promise, because I can perform it: but I can neither take the oaths, nor forsake my religion; because I know not what church to go to, if I leave the Catholic; they are all so divided amongst themselves in matters of faith, necessary to salvation, and yet all assuming the name of Protestants. May God be pleased to open your eyes, as he has opened mine! Truth is but one, and they who have once heard of it can plead no excuse if they do not embrace it. But these are things too serious for a trifling letter.» If, therefore, adherence to the communion of a falling sect, loaded too at the time with heavy disqualifications,

and liable to yet more dangerous suspicions, can be allowed as a proof of sincerity, we can hardly question that Dryden was, from the date of his conviction, a serious and sincere Roman Catholic.

The conversion of Dryden did not long remain unrewarded, nor was his pen suffered to be idle in the cause which he had adopted. On the 4th of March 1685-6, an hundred pounds a-year, payable quarterly, was added to his pension;[1] and probably he found himself more at ease under the regular and economical government of James, than when his support depended on the exhausted exchequer of Charles. Soon after the granting of this boon, he was employed to defend the reasons of conversion to the Catholic faith, alleged by Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, which, together with two papers on a similar subject, said to have been found in Charles II.'s strong box, James had with great rashness given to the public. Stillingfleet, now at the head of the champions of the Protestant faith, published some sharp remarks

[1] The grant bears this honourable consideration, which I extract from Mr Malone's work: «Pat. 2. Jac. p. 4. n. 1. Know ye, that we, for and in consideration of the many good and acceptable services done by John Dryden, Master of Arts, to our late dearest brother King Charles the Second, as also to us done and performed, and taking notice of the learning and eminent abilities of the said J. D.» etc.

on these papers. Another hand, probably that of a Jesuit, was employed to vindicate against him the royal grounds of conversation; while to Dryden was committed the charge of defending those alleged by the Duchess. The tone of Dryden's apology was, to say the least, highly injudicious, and adapted to irritate the feelings of the clergy of the established church, already sufficiently exasperated to see the sacrifices which they had made to the royal cause utterly forgotten, the moment that they paused in the extremity of their devotion towards the monarch. The name of «Legion,» which the apologist bestows on his adversaries, intimates the committee of the clergy by whom the Protestant cause was then defended; and the tone of his arguments is harsh, contemptuous, and insulting. A raker-up of the ashes of princes, an hypocrite, a juggler, a latitudinarian, are the best terms which he affords the advocate of the church of England, in defence of which he had so lately been himself a distinguished champion. Stillingfleet returned to the charge; and when he came to the part of the Defence written by Dryden, he did not spare the personal invective, to which the acrimonious style of the poet-laureat had indeed given an opening. «Zeal,» says Stillingfleet, «in a new convert, is a terrible thing, for it not only burns, but rages like the erup-

tions of Mount Ætna; it fills the air with noise and smoke, and throws out such a torrent of living fire, that there is no standing before it.» In another passage, Stillingfleet talks of the «temptation of changing religion for bread;» in another, our author's words, that

«Priests of all religions are the same,» [1]

are quoted to infer, that he who has no religion may declare for any. Dryden took his revenge both on Stillingfleet the author, and on Burnet, whom he seems to have regarded as the reviser of this answer, in his polemical poem of «The Hind and the Panther.»

If we can believe an ancient tradition, this poem was chiefly composed in a country retirement at Rushton, near his birth-place in Huntingdon. There was an embowered walk at this place, which, from the pleasure which the poet took in it, retained the name of Dryden's Walk; and here was erected, about the middle of last century, an urn, with the following inscription: «In memory of Dryden, who frequented these shades, and is here said to have composed his poem of 'The Hind and the Panther.'» [2]

«The Hind and the Panther» was written

[1] «Absalom and Achitophel.»

[2] I am indebted for this anecdote to Mr Octavius Gilchrist, the editor of the poems of the witty Bishop Corbett.

with a view to obviate the objections of the English clergy and people to the power of dispensing with the test laws, usurped by James II. A change of political measures, which took place while the poem was composing, has greatly injured its unity and consistence. In the earlier part of his reign, James endeavoured to gain the Church of England, by fair means and flattery, to submit to the remission which he claimed the liberty of granting to the Catholics. The first part of Dryden's poem is written upon this soothing plan; the Panther, or Church of England, is

> ——— sure the noblest next the hind,
> And fairest offspring of the spotted kind.
> Oh could her in-born stains be wash'd away,
> She were too good to be a beast of prey.

The sects, on the other hand, are characterized, wolves, bears, boars, foxes,—all that is odious and horrible in the brute creation. But ere the poem was published, the king had assumed a different tone with the Established Church. Relying upon the popularity which the suspension of the penal laws was calculated to procure among the Dissenters, he endeavoured to strengthen his party by making common cause between them and the Catholics, and bidding open defiance to the Church of England. For a short time, and with the most ignorant of the sectaries, this

plan seemed to succeed; the pleasure of a triumph over their ancient enemies rendering them blind to the danger of the common Protestant cause. During this interval the poem was concluded; and the last book seems to consider the cause of the Hind and Panther as gone to a final issue, and incapable of any amicable adjustment. The Panther is fairly resigned to her fate.

——— «Her hour of grace was pass'd,»

and the downfall of the English hierarchy is foretold in that of the doves, who, in a subaltern allegory, represent the clergy of the Established Church:

«'T is said, the doves repented, though too late,
Become the smiths of their own foolish fate:
Nor did their owner hasten their ill hour,
But, sunk in credit, they decreased in power;
Like snows in warmth that mildly pass away,
Dissolving in the silence of decay.»

In the preface, as well as in the course of the poem, Dryden frequently alludes to his dispute with Stillingfleet; and perhaps none of his poems contain finer lines than those in which he takes credit for the painful exertion of Christian forbearance, when called by injured feeling to resent personal accusation:

«If joys hereafter must be purchased here
With loss of all that mortals hold so dear,
Then welcome infamy and public shame,
And last, a long farewell to worldly fame!

'T is said with ease; but, oh, how hardly tried
By haughty souls to human honour tied!
O sharp convulsive pangs of agonizing pride!
Down then, thou rebel, never more to rise!
And what thou didst, and dost, so dearly prize,
That fame, that darling fame, make that thy sacrifice.
'T is nothing thou hast given; then add thy tears
For a long race of unrepenting years:
'T is nothing yet, yet all thou hast to give;
Then add those may-be years thou hast to live:
Yet nothing still! then poor and naked come,
Thy father will receive his unthrift home,
And thy blest Saviour's blood discharge the mighty sum.»

Stillingfleet is, however, left personally undistinguished; but Burnet, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, receives chastisement in his stead. The character of this prelate, however unjustly exaggerated, preserves many striking and curious traits of resemblance to the original; and, as was natural, gave deep offence to the party for whom it was drawn. For not only did Burnet at the time express himself with great asperity of Dryden, but long afterwards, when writing his history, he pronounced a severe censure on the immorality of his plays, so inaccurately expressed as to be applicable, by common construction, to the author's private character. From this coarse and inexplicit accusation, the memory of Dryden was indignantly vindicated by his friend Lord Lansdowne.

It is also worth remarking, that in the allegory of the swallows, introduced in the Third

Part of «The Hind and the Panther,» the author seems to have had in his eye the proposal made at a grand consult of the Catholics, that they should retire from the general and increasing hatred of all ranks, and either remain quiet at home, or settle abroad. This plan, which originated in their despair of James's being able to do any thing effectual in their favour, was set aside by the fiery opposition of Father Petre, the martin of the fable told by the Panther to the Hind.

The appearance of «The Hind and the Panther» excited a clamour against the author far more general than the publication of «Absalom and Achitophel.» Upon that occasion, the offence was given only to a party; but this open and avowed defence of James's strides towards arbitrary power, with the unpopular circumstance of its coming from a new convert to the royal faith, involved our poet in the general suspicion with which the nation at large now viewed the slightest motions of their infatuated monarch. The most noted amongst those who appeared to oppose the triumphant advocate of the Hind were Montague and Prior, young men now rising into eminence. They joined to produce a parody entitled the «Town and Country Mouse;» part of which Mr Bayes is supposed to gratify his old friends, Smith and Johnson, by repeating to them. The piece is, therefore,

founded upon the twice-told jest of the «Rehearsal.» Of the parody itself, we have given ample specimen in its proper place. There is nothing new or original in the idea, which chiefly turns upon the ridiculing the poem of Dryden, where religious controversy is made the subject of dispute and adjustment between a Hind and a Panther, who vary between their typical character of animals, and their real character as the Catholic and English church. In this piece, Prior, though the younger man, seems to have had by far the larger share. Lord Peterborough, on being asked whether the satire was not written by Montague in conjunction with Prior, answered, «Yes; as if I, seated in Mr Cheselden's chaise drawn by his fine horse, should say, *Lord!* how finely we draw this chaise!» Indeed, although the parody was trite and obvious, the satirists had the public upon their side; and it now seems astonishing with what acclamations this attack upon the most able champion of James's faith was hailed by his discontented subjects. Dryden was considered as totally overcome by his assailants; they deemed themselves, and were deemed by others, as worthy of very distinguished and weighty recompense;[1] and what was yet

[1] That Prior was discontented with his share of preferment, appears from the verses entitled «Earl Robert's Mice,» and an angry expostulation elsewhere:

a more decisive proof that their bolt had attained its mark, the aged poet is said to have lamented, even with tears, the usage he had received from two young men, to whom he had been always civil. This last circumstance is probably exaggerated. Montague and Prior had doubtless been frequenters of Will's coffee-house, where Dryden held the supreme rule in criticism, and had thus, among other rising wits, been distinguished by him. That he should have felt their satire is natural, for the arrow flew with the wind, and popularity amply supplied its deficiency in real vigour; but the reader may probably conclude with Johnson, that Dryden was too much hackneyed in political warfare to suffer so deeply from the parody as Dr Lockier's anecdote would lead us to believe. « If we can suppose him vexed,» says that accurate judge of human nature, « we can hardly deny him sense to conceal his uneasiness.»

> My friend Charles Montague 's preferr'd ;
> Nor would I have it long observed,
> That one mouse eats while t' other's starved.

There is a popular tradition, but no farther to be relied on than as showing the importance attached to the «Town and Country Mouse,» which says, that Dorset, in presenting Montague to King William, said, «I have brought a *Mouse* to wait on your majesty.» «I will make a man of him,» said the king; and settled a pension of 500*l.* upon the fortunate satirist.

Although Prior and Montague were first in place and popularity, there wanted not the usual crowd of inferior satirists and poetasters to follow them to the charge. «The Hind and the Panther» was assailed by a variety of pamphlets, by Tom Brown and others, of which an account, with specimens, perhaps more than sufficient, is annexed to the notes on the poem. It is worth mentioning, that on this, as on a former occasion, an adversary of Dryden chose to select one of his own poems as a contrast to his latter opinions. The «*Religio Laici*» was reprinted, and carefully opposed to the various passages of «The Hind and the Panther,» which appeared most contradictory to its tenets. But while the Grub-street editor exulted in successfully pointing out the inconsistency between Dryden's earlier and later religious opinions, he was incapable of observing, that the change was adopted in consequence of the same unbroken train of reasoning, and that Dryden, when he wrote the «*Religio Laici*,» was under the impulse of the same conviction which, further prosecuted, led him to acquiesce in the faith of Rome.

The king appears to have been hardly less anxious to promote the dispersion of «The Hind and the Panther,» than the Protestant party to ridicule the piece and its author. It

was printed about the same time at London and in Edinburgh, where a printing-press was maintained in Holyrood-House, for the dispersion of tracts favouring the Catholic religion. The poem went rapidly through two or three editions; a circumstance rather to be imputed to the celebrity of the author, and to the anxiety which foes, as well as friends, entertained to learn his sentiments, than to any disposition to acquiesce in his arguments.

But Dryden's efforts in favour of the Catholic cause were not limited to this controversial poem. He is said to have been at first employed by the court, in translating Varillas's «History of Heresies,» a work held in considerable estimation by the Catholic divines. Accordingly, an entry to that purpose was made by Tonson in the Stationers' books, of such a translation made by Dryden at his majesty's command. This circumstance is also mentioned by Burnet, who adds, in very coarse and abusive terms, that the success of his own remarks having destroyed the character of Varillas as a historian, the disappointed translator revenged himself by the severe character of the Buzzard, under which the future Bishop of Sarum is depicted in «The Hind and the Panther.»[1] The cre-

[1] The passage, as quoted at length by Mr Malone, removes an obscurity which puzzled former biographers, at

dulity of Burnet, especially where his vanity was concerned, was unbounded; and there seems room to trace Dryden's attack upon

least as far as any thing can be made clear, which must ultimately depend upon such clumsy diction as the following: «It (the answer of Burnet) will perhaps be a little longer a digesting to Mons. Varillas, than it was a preparing to me. One proof will quickly appear, whether the world is so satisfied with his Answer, as upon that to return to any thoughts of his history; for I have been informed from England, that a gentleman, who is known both for poetry and other things, had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's History; but that, as soon as my Reflections appeared, he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his answer, he will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of the animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough for an author: and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history, that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion to choose one of the worst. It is true, he had something to sink from, in matter of wit; but as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months' labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear,

him, rather to some real or supposed concern in the controversy about the Duchess of York's papers, so often alluded to in the poem, than to the commentary on Varillas, which is not once mentioned. Yet it seems certain that Dryden entertained thoughts of translating «The History of Heresies;» and, for whatever reason, laid the task aside. He soon after was engaged in a task, of a kind as unpromising as remote from his poetical studies, and connected, in the same close degree, with the religious views of the unfortunate James II. This was no other than the translation of «The Life of St Francis Xavier,» one of the last adopted saints of the Catholic church, at least whose merits and supposed miracles were those of a missionary. Xavier is perhaps among the latest also, whose renown for sanctity, and the powers attending it, appears to have been extensive, even while he was yet alive.[1] Above all, he was of the order of Jesuits, and the

whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour, or in mine. It is true, Mr D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it, as he has done by his last employment.»

[1] In the «Staple of News,» act iii. scene 2. Jonson talks of the miracles done by the Jesuits in Japan and China, as current articles of intelligence.

very saint to whom Mary of Este had addressed her vows, in hopes to secure a Catholic successor to the throne of England.[1] It was, therefore, natural enough, that Dryden should have employed himself in translating the life of a saint, whose virtues must at that time have appeared so peculiarly meritorious, whose praises were so acceptable to his patroness, and whose miracles were wrought for the credit of the Catholic church, within so late a period. Besides, the work had been composed by Bartoli, in Portuguese, and by Bouhours, in French. With the merits of the latter we are well acquainted; of the former, Dryden speaks highly in the dedication. It may perhaps be

[1] In the Dedication to the Queen, this is stated with a gravity suitable to the occasion. «The reverend author of this Life, in his dedication to his most Christian Majesty, affirms, that France was owing for him to the intercession of St Francis Xavier. That Anne of Austria, his mother, after twenty years of barrenness, had recourse to heaven, by her fervent prayers, to draw down that blessing, and addressed her devotions, in a particular manner, to this holy apostle of the Indies. I know not, madam, whether I may presume to tell the world, that your majesty has chosen this great saint for one of your celestial patrons, though I am sure you will never be ashamed of owning so glorious an intercessor; not even in a country where the doctrine of the holy church is questioned, and those religious addresses ridiculed. Your majesty, I doubt not, has the inward satisfaction of knowing, that such pious prayers have not been unprofitable to you; and the nation may one day come to understand, how happy it will be for them to have a son of prayers ruling over them.»

more surprising, that the present writer should have retained this translation, than that Dryden should have undertaken it. But surely the only work of this very particular and enthusiastic nature, which the modern English language has to exhibit, was worthy of preservation, were it but as a curiosity. The creed and the character of Catholic faith are now so much forgotten among us (popularly speaking), that, in reading the «Life of Xavier,» the Protestant finds himself in a new and enchanted land. The motives, and the incidents, and the doctrines, are alike new to him, and, indeed, occasionally form a strange contrast among themselves. There are few who can read, without a sentiment of admiration, the heroic devotion with which, from the highest principle of duty, Xavier exposes himself to hardship, to danger, to death itself, that he may win souls to the Christian faith. The most rigid Protestant, and the most indifferent philosopher, cannot deny to him the courage and patience of a martyr, with the good sense, resolution, ready wit, and address, of the best negociator that ever went upon a temporal embassy. It is well that our admiration is qualified by narrations so monstrous, as his actually restoring the dead to life; so profane, as the inference concerning the sweating crucifix; so trivial and absurd, as a crab's fishing up Xavier's cross, which had

fallen into the sea; and, to conclude, so shocking to humanity, as the account of the saint passing by the house of his ancestors, the abode of his aged mother, on his road to leave Europe for ever, and conceiving he did God good service in denying himself the melancholy consolation of a last farewell. Altogether it forms a curious picture of the human mind, strung to a pitch of enthusiasm, which we can only learn from such narratives: and those to whom this affords no amusement, may glean some curious particulars from the «Life of Xavier,» concerning the state of India and Japan, at the time of his mission, as well as of the internal regulations and singular policy adopted by the society, of which the saint was a member. Besides the «Life of Xavier,» Dryden is said to have translated Bossuet's «Exposition of the Catholic Doctrine;» but for this we have but slight authority.[1]

Dryden's political and polemic discussions naturally interfered at this period with his more general poetical studies. About the period of James's accession, Tonson had indeed published a second Volume of Miscellanies, to which our poet contributed a critical

[1] «In the Bodleian Catalogue another work is attributed to our author, on very slight grounds: 'An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church,' translated from Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, and published at London in 1685. The only authority for attributing this

preface, with various translations from Virgil, Lucretius, and Theocritus, and four Odes of Horace; of which the third of the First Book is happily applied to Lord Roscommon, and the twenty-ninth to Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester. Upon these and his other translations Garth has the following striking and forcible observations, though expressed in language somewhat quaint. «I cannot pass by that admirable English poet, without endeavouring to make his country sensible of the obligations they have to his Muse. Whether they consider the flowing grace of his versification, the vigorous sallies of his fancy, or the peculiar delicacy of his periods, they all discover excellencies never to be enough admired. If they trace him from the first productions of his youth to the last performances of his age, they will find, that as the tyranny of rhyme never imposed on the perspicuity of sense, so a languid sense never wanted to be set off by the harmony of rhyme. And, as his earlier works wanted

translation to Dryden, should seem to have been the following note in Bishop Barlow's hand-writing, at the bottom of the title-page of the copy belonging to the Bodleian Library:

'By Mr Dryden, then only a poet, now a papist too: may be, he was a papist before, but not known till of late.'

«This book had belonged to Bishop Barlow, who died in 1691.»—Malone.

no maturity, so his latter wanted no force or spirit. The falling off of his hair had no other consequence than to make his laurels be seen the more.

«As a translator, he was just; as an inventor, he was rich. His versions of some parts of Lucretius, Horace, Homer, and Virgil, throughout, gave him a just pretence to that compliment which was made to Monsieur d'Ablancourt, a celebrated French translator. *It is uncertain who have the greatest obligation to him, the dead or the living.*

«With all these wondrous talents he was libelled, in his lifetime, by the very men who had no other excellencies but as they were his imitators. Where he was allowed to have sentiments superior to all others, they charged him with theft. But how did he steal? no otherwise than like those who steal beggars' children, only to clothe them the better.»

In this reign Dryden wrote the first Ode to St Cecilia, for her festival, in 1687. This and the Ode to the Memory of Mrs Anne Killigrew, a performance much in the manner of Cowley, and which has been admired perhaps fully as much as it merits, were the only pieces of general poetry which he produced between the accession of James and the Revolution. It was, however, about this time, that the poet became acquainted with the simple and beautiful hymns of the Catholic

ritual, the only pieces of uninspired sacred poetry which are worthy of the purpose to which they are dedicated. It is impossible to hear the «*Dies iræ*,» or the «*Stabat Mater dolorosa*,» without feeling, that the stately simplicity of the language, differing almost as widely from classical poetry as from that of modern nations, awes the congregation, like the architecture of the Gothic cathedrals in which they are chaunted. The ornaments which are wanting to these striking effusions of devotion are precisely such as would diminish their grand and solemn effect; and nothing but the cogent and irresistible propriety of addressing the Divinity in a language understood by the whole worshipping assembly, could have justified the discarding these magnificent hymns from the reformed worship. We must suppose that Dryden, as a poet, was interested in the poetical part of the religion which he had chosen; and his translation of «*Veni, Creator Spiritus*,» which was probably recommended to him as being the favourite hymn of St Francis Xavier,[1] shows that they did so. But it is less gene-

[1] « Before the beginning of every canonical hour, he always said the hymn of '*Veni, Creator Spiritus*;' and it was observed, that while he said it, his countenance was enlightened, as if the Holy Ghost, whom he invoked, was visibly descended on him.»

rally known, that the English Catholics have preserved two other translations ascribed to Dryden; one of the «*Te Deum*,» the other of the Hymn for St John's Eve; which are inserted in the poet's works.

A characteristic of James's administration was rigid economy, not only in ordinary matters, but towards his own partisans;—a wretched quality in a prince, who was attempting a great and unpopular revolution both in religion and politics, and ought, by his liberality, and even profusion, to have attached the hearts and excited the hopes of those fiery and unsettled spirits, who are ever foremost in times of national tumult. Dryden, one of his most efficient and zealous supporters, and who had taken the step which of all others was calculated to please James, received only, as we have seen, after the interval of nearly a year from that prince's accession, an addition of 100l. to his yearly pension. There may, however, on occasion of « The Hind and the Panther,» the Controversy with Stillingfleet, and other works undertaken with an express view to the royal interest, have been private communications of James's favour. But Dryden, always ready to supply with hope the deficiency of present possession, went on his literary course rejoicing. A lively epistle to his friend Etherege,

then envoy for James at Ratisbon, shows the lightness and buoyancy of his spitits at this supposed auspicious period.

An event, deemed of the utmost and most beneficial importance to the family of Stuart, but which, according to their usual ill fortune, helped to precipitate their ruin, next called forth the public gratulation of the poet-laureat. This was the birth of that « son of prayers» prophesied in the dedication to Xavier, whom the English, with obstinate incredulity, long chose to consider as an impostor, grafted upon the royal line to the prejudice of the Protestant succession. Dryden's « Britannia Rediviva» hailed, with the enthusiasm of a Catholic and a poet, the very event, which, removing all hope of succession in the course of nature, precipitated the measures of the Prince of Orange, exhausted the patience of the exasperated people, and led them violently to extirpate a hated dynasty, which seemed likely to be protracted by a new reign. The merits of the poem have been considered in the introductory remarks prefixed in this edition.

Whatever hopes Dryden may have conceived in consequence of « The Hind and the Panther,» « Britannia Rediviva,» and other works favourable to the cause of James and of his religion, they were suddenly ans for ever blighted by the Revolution. It cannot be

supposed that the poet viewed without anxiety the crisis while yet at a distance; and perhaps his own tale of the Swallows may have begun to bear, even to the author, the air of a prophecy. He is said, in an obscure libel, to have been among those courtiers who encouraged, by frequent visits, the camp on Hounslow Heath,[1] upon which the king had grounded his hopes of subduing the contumacy of his subjects, and repelling the invasion of the Prince of Orange. If so, he must there have learned how unwilling the troops were to se-

[1] Here daily swarm prodigious nights,
And strange variety of sights,
As ladies lewd, and foppish knights,
Priests, poets, pimps, and parasites;
Which now we 'll spare, and only mention
The hungry bard that writes for pension:
Old Squab (who 's sometimes here, I 'm told),
That oft has with his prince made bold,
Call'd the late king a sant'ring cully,
To magnify the Gallic bully;
Who lately put a senseless banter
Upon the world, with Hind and Panther;
Making the beasts and birds o' the wood
Debate, what he ne'er understood,
Deep secrets in philosophy,
And mysteries in theology,
All sung in wretched poetry;
Which rambling piece is as much farce all,
As his true mirror, the «Rehearsal;»
For which he has been soundly bang'd,
But ha'n 't his just reward till hang'd.
Poem on the Camp at Hounslow.

cond their monarch in his unpopular and unconstitutional attempts; and must have sadly anticipated the event of a struggle between a king and his whole people. When this memorable catastrophe had taken place, our author found himself at once exposed to all the insult, calumny, and sarcasm, with which a successful party in politics never fail to overwhelm their discomfited adversaries. But, what he must have felt yet more severely, the unpopularity of his religion and principles rendered it not merely unsafe, but absolutely impossible, for him to make retaliation. His powers of satire, at such a period, were of no more use to Dryden than a sword to a man who cannot draw it; only serving to render the pleasure of insulting him more poignant to his enemies, and the necessity of passive submission more bitter to himself. Of the numerous satires, libels, songs, parodies, and pasquinades, which solemnized the downfall of Popery and of James, Dryden had not only some exclusively dedicated to his case, but engaged a portion, more or less, of almost every one which appeared. Scarce Father Petre, or the Papal envoy Dada, themselves, were more distinguished, by these lampoons, than the poet-laureat; the unsparing exertion of whose satirical powers, as well as his unrivalled literary pre-eminence, had excited a strong party against him among the inferior

wits, whose political antipathy was aggravated by ancient resentment and literary envy. An extract from one of each kind may serve to show, how very little wit was judged necessary by Dryden's contemporaries to a successful attack upon him.[1]

[1] Extracts from «The Address of John Dryden, Laureat, to his Highness the Prince of Orange:»

In all the hosannas our whole world's applause,
Illustrious champion of our church and laws!
Accept, great Nassau! from unworthy me,
Amongst the adoring crowd, a bended knee;
Nor scruple, sir, to hear my echoing lyre,
Strung, tuned, and join'd to the universal choir;
From my suspected mouth thy glories told,
A known out-lyer from the English fold.

After renewing the old reproach about Cromwell:

If thus all this I could unblushing write,
Fear not that pen that shall thy praise indite,
When high-born blood my adoration draws,
Exalted glory and unblemish'd cause;
A theme so all divine my muse shall wing,
What is 't for thee, great prince, I will not sing?
No bounds shall stop my Pegasian flight,
I 'll spot my Hind, and make my Panther white.
— — — — — —
But if, great prince, my feeble strength shall fail,
Thy theme I 'll to my successors entail;
My heirs the unfinish'd subject shall complete:
I have a son, and he, by all that 's great,
That very son (and trust my oaths, I swore
As much to my great master James before)
Shall, by his sire's example, Rome renounce,
For he, young stripling, yet has turn'd but once;
That Oxford nursling, that sweet hopeful boy,
His father's and that once Ignatian joy,

Nor was the «pelting of this pitiless storm» of abusive raillery the worst evil to which our author was subjected. The religion which he

> Designed for a new Bellarmin Goliah,
> Under the great Gamaliel, Obadiah;
> This youth, great sir, shall your fame's trumpets blow,
> And soar when my dull wings shall flag below.
>
> — — — — — —
>
> Why should I blush to turn, when my defence
> And plea 's so plain? —for if Omnipotence
> Be the highest attribute that heaven can boast,
> That 's the truest church that heaven resembles most.
> The tables then are turn'd: and 't is confest,
> The strongest and the mightiest is the best:
> In all my changes I'm on the right side,
> And by the same great season justified.
> When the bold Crescent late attack'd the Cross,
> Resolved the empire of the world to engross,
> Had tottering Vienna's walls but fail'd,
> And Turkey over Christendom prevail'd,
> Long ere this I had cross'd the Dardanello,
> And reign'd the mighty Mahomet's hail fellow;
> Quitting my duller hopes, the poor renown
> Of Eton College, or a Dublin gown,
> And commenced graduate in the grand divan,
> Had reign'd a more immortal Mussulman.

The lines which follow are taken from «The Deliverance,» a poem to the Prince of Orange, by a Person of Quality. 9th February, 1688-9.

> Alas! how cruel is a poet's fate!
> Or who indeed would be a laureat,
> That must or fall or turn with every change of state?
> Poor bard! if thy hot zeal for loyal Wem [1]
> Forbids thy tacking, sing his requiem;
> Sing something, prithee, to enure thy thumb;
> Nothing but conscience strikes a poet dumb.

[1] *Lord Jefferies, Baron of Wem.*

professed, rendered him incapable of holding any office under the new government, even if he could have bended his political principles to take the oaths to William and Mary. We may easily believe, that Dryden's old friend Dorset, now lord high-chamberlain, felt repugnance to render vacant the places of poet-laureat and royal historiographer, by removing the man in England most capable of filling them; but the sacrifice was inevitable. Dryden's own feelings, on losing the situation of poet-laureat, must have been greatly aggravated by the selection of his despised opponent Shadwell as his successor; a scribbler whom, in « Mac-Flecknoe,» he had himself placed pre-eminent in the regions of dulness, but who

Conscience, that dull chimera of the schools,
A learned imposition upon fools,
Thou, Dryden, art not silenced with such stuff,
Egad thy conscience has been large enough.
But here are loyal subjects still, and foes,
Many to mourn, for many to oppose.
Shall thy great master, thy almighty Jove,
Whom thou to place above the gods hast strove,
Shall he from David's throne so early fall,
And laureat Dryden not one tear let fall;
Nor sings the bard his exit in one poor pastoral?
Thee fear confines, thee, Dryden, fear confines,
And grief, nor shame, stops thy recanting lines.
Our Damon is as generous as great,
And well could pardon tears that love create,
Shouldst thou, in justice to thy vexed soul,
Not sing to him, but thy lost lord condole.
But silence is a damning error, John;
I 'd or my master or myself bemoan.

now, so far as royal mandate can arrange such precedence, was raised in his stead as chief among English poets. This very remarkable coincidence has led several of Dryden's biographers, and Dr Johnson among others, to suppose that the satire was actually written to ridicule Shadwell's elevation to the honours of the laurel; though nothing is more certain than that it was published while Dryden was himself laureat, and could be hardly supposed to anticipate the object of his satire becoming his successor. Shadwell, however, possessed merits with King William, which were probably deemed by that prince of more importance than all the genius of Shakspeare, Milton, and Dryden, if it could have been combined in one individual. He was a staunch Whig, and had suffered under the former government, being « silenced as a non-conforming poet;» the doors of the theatre closed against his plays; and, if he may himself be believed, even his life endangered, not only by the slow process of starving, but some more active proceeding of his powerful enemies.[1] Shadwell, moreover, had not failed to hail the dawn of the Revolution by a congratulatory poem to the Prince of Orange, and to

[1] In the dedication of «Bury-Fair» to his patron the Earl of Dorset, he claims the merit due to his political constancy and sufferings: «I never could recant in the worst of times, when my ruin was designed, and my life

Queen Mary on her arrival. In every point of view, his principles, fidelity, and alacrity, claimed William's countenance; he was presented to him by Dorset, not as the best poet, but as the most honest man, politically speaking, among the competitors;[1] and accordingly succeeded to Dryden's situation as poet-laureat and royal historiographer, with the appointment of 300*l.* a-year. Shadwell, as might have been expected, triumphed in his success over his great antagonist; but his triumph was expressed in strains which showed he was totally unworthy of it.[2]

was sought, and for near ten years I was kept from the exercise of that profession which had afforded me a competent subsistence; and surely I shall not now do it, when there is a liberty of speaking common sense, which, though not long since forbidden, is now grown current."

[1] See Cibber or Shiels's Life of Shadwell.

[2] These wretched poëtitos, who got praise
For writing most confounded loyal plays,
With viler, coarser jests than at Bear-garden,
And silly Grub-street songs worse than Tom-farthing.
If any noble patriot did excel,
His own and country's rights defending well,
These yelping curs were straight loo'd on to bark,
On the deserving man to set a mark.
These abject, fawning parasites and knaves,
Since they were such, would have all others slaves.
'T was precious loyalty that was thought fit
To atone for want of honesty and wit.
No wonder common-sense was all cried down,
And noise and nonsense swagger'd through the town.

Dryden, deprived by the Revolution of present possession and future hope, was now reduced to the same, or a worse situation, than he had occupied in the year of the Restoration, his income resting almost entirely upon his literary exertions, his expenses increased by the necessity of providing and educating his family, and the advantage of his high reputation perhaps more than counterbalanced by the popular prejudice against his religion and party. So situated, he patiently and prudently bent to the storm which he could not resist; and though he might privately circulate a few light pieces in favour of the exiled family, as the «Lady's Song,» and the translation of Pitcairn's beautiful Epitaph on the Viscount of Dundee, it seems certain, that he made no formal attack on the government, either in verse or prose. Those who imputed to him the satires on the Revolution, called «*Suum*

> Our author, then opprest, would have you know it,
> Was silenced for a non-conformist poet;
> In those hard times he bore the utmost test,
> And now he swears he 's loyal as the best.
> Now, sirs, since common-sense has won the day,
> Be kind to this, as to his last year's play.
> His friends stood firmly to him when distress'd;
> He hopes the number is not now decreased.
> He found esteem from those he valued most;
> Proud of his friends, he of his foes could boast.
>
> *Prologue to Bury-Fair.*

Cuique,» and «Tarquin and Tullia,» did injustice both to his prudence and his poetry. The last, and probably both satires, were written by Mainwaring, who lived to change his opinions, and become very sorry for what he had done.

The theatre again became Dryden's immediate resource. Indeed, the very first play Queen Mary attended was one of our poet's, which had been prohibited during the reign of James II. But the revival of the «Spanish Friar» could afford but little gratification to the author, whose newly-adopted religion is so severely satirized in the person of father Dominic. Nor was this ill-fated representation doomed to afford more pleasure to the personage by whom it was appointed. For the audience applied the numerous passages, concerning the deposing the old king and planting a female usurper on the throne, to the memorable change which had just taken place; and all eyes were fixed upon Queen Mary, with an expression which threw her into extreme confusion.[1]

Dryden, after the Revolution, began to lay the foundation for a new structure of fame and popularity in the tragedy of «Don Sebastian.» This tragedy, which has been justly regarded as the *chef-d'œuvre* of his plays, was

[1] Introduction to «Spanish Friar.»

not, he has informed us, «huddled up in haste.» The author knew the circumstances in which he stood, while, as he expresses it, his ungenerous enemies were taking advantage of the times to ruin his reputation; and was conscious, that the full exertion of his genius was necessary to secure a favourable reception from an audience prepossessed against him and his tenets. Nor did he neglect to smooth the way, by inscribing the piece to the Earl of Leicester, brother of Algernon Sidney, who had borne arms against Charles in the civil war; and yet, Whig or republican as he was, had taste and feeling enough to patronize the degraded laureat and proscribed Catholic. The dedication turns upon the philosophical and moderate use of political victory, the liberality of considering the friend rather than the cause, the dignity of forgiving and relieving the fallen adversary; themes, upon which the eloquence of the suffering party is usually unbounded, although sometimes forgotten when they come again into power. With all this deprecatory reasoning, Dryden does not recede, or hint at receding, one inch from his principles, but concludes his preface with a resolution to adopt the counsel of the classic:

«*Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito.*»

The merits of this beautiful tragedy I have

attempted to analyse in another place, and at considerable length. It was brought forward in 1690, with great theatrical pomp.[1] But with all these advantages, the first reception of «Don Sebastian» was but cool; nor was it until several retrenchments and alterations had been made, that it rose to the high pitch in public favour which it maintained for many years, and deserved to maintain for ever.

In the same year, «Amphitryon,» in which Dryden displays his comic powers to more advantage than any where, excepting in the «Spanish Friar,» was acted with great applause, calling forth the gratulations even of Milbourne, who afterwards made so violent an attack upon the translation of Virgil. The comedy was inscribed to Sir William Leveson Gower, whose name, well known in the history of Revolution, may be supposed to have been invoked as a talisman against misconstructions, to which Dryden's situation so peculiarly exposed him, and to which he plainly alludes in the prologue.[2] Our au-

[1] «A play well-dressed, you know, is half in half, as a great writer says. The Morocco dresses, when new, formerly for 'Sebastian,' they say, enlivened the play as much as the 'pudding and dumpling' song did Merlin.»—*The Female Wits*, a comedy by Mountfort.

[2] The labouring bee, when his sharp sting is gone,
Forgets his golden work, and turns a drone;
Such is a satire, when you take away
That rage, in which his noble vigour lay.

thor's choice of this patron was probably dictated by Sir William Gower's connexion with the Earl of Rochester, whose granddaughter he had married.

Encouraged by the revival of his popularity, Dryden now ventured to bring forward the opera of «King Arthur,» originally designed as an entertainment to Charles II.; «Albion and Albanius» being written as a sort of introductory masque upon the occasion.[1] When we consider the strong and even violent political tendency of that prefatory piece, we may readily suppose, that the opera was originally written in a strain very different from the present; and that much must have been softened, altered, and erased, ere a play, designed to gratulate the discovery of the Rye-house plot, could, without hazard, be acted after the Revolution. The odious, though necessary, task of defacing his own labours,

> What gain you by not suffering him to teaze ye?
> He neither can offend you now, nor please ye.
> The honey-bag and venom lay so near,
> That both together you resolved to tear,
> And lost your pleasure to secure your fear.
> How can he show his manhood, if you bind him
> To box, like boys, with one hand tied behind him?
> This is plain levelling of wit; in which
> The poor has all the advantage, not the rich.
> The blockhead stands excused for wanting sense;
> And wits turn blockheads in their own defence.

[1] See page 2.

was sufficiently disgusting to the poet, who complains, that «not to offend the present times, nor a government which has hitherto protected me, I have been obliged so much to alter the first design, and take away so many beauties from the writing, that it is now no more what it was formerly, than the present ship of the Royal Sovereign, after so often taking down and altering, is the vessel it was at the first building.» Persevering in the prudent system of seeking patrons among those whose patronage was rendered effectual by their influence with the prevailing party, Dryden prefixed to «King Arthur» a beautiful dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, to whose cautious and nice policy he ascribes the nation's escape from the horrors of civil war, which seemed impending in the latter years of Charles II.; and he has not failed, at the same time, to pay a passing tribute to the merits of his original and good-humoured master. The music of «King Arthur,» being composed by Purcell, gave Dryden occasion to make that eminent musician some well-deserved compliments, which were probably designed as a peace-offering for the injudicious preference given to Grabut in the introduction to «Albion and Albanius.»[1] The dances were composed by Priest; and the whole piece was

[1] See page 4.

eminently successful. Its good fortune, however, was imputed, by the envious, to a lively song in the last act, which had little or nothing to do with the business of the piece. In this opera ended all the hopes which the world might entertain of an epic poem from Dryden on the subject of King Arthur.

Our author was by no means so fortunate in « Cleomenes, » his next dramatic effort. The times were something changed since the Revolution. The Tories, who had originally contributed greatly to that event, had repented them of abandoning the Stuart family, and, one after another, were returning to their attachment to James. It is probable that this gave new courage to Dryden, who, although upon the accession of King William, he saw himself a member of an odious and proscribed sect, now belonged to a broad political faction, which a variety of events was daily increasing. Hence his former caution was diminished, and the suspicion of his enemies increased in proportion. The choice of the subject, the history of a Spartan prince exiled from his kingdom, and waiting the assistance of a foreign monarch to regain it, corresponded too nearly with that of the unfortunate James. The scene of a popular insurrection, where the minds of a whole people were inflamed, was liable to misinter-

pretation. In short, the whole story of the Spartan Cleomenes was capable of being wrested to political and jacobitic purposes; and there wanted not many to aver, that to such purposes it had been actually applied by Dryden. Neither was the state of our author such at the time, as to permit his pleading his own cause. The completion of the piece having been interrupted by indisposition, was devolved upon his friend Southerne, who revised and concluded the last act. The whispers of the author's enemies in the mean time procured a prohibition, at least a suspension, of the representation of «Cleomenes» from the Lord Chamberlain. The exertions of Hyde, Earl of Rochester, who, although a Tory, was possessed necessarily of some influence as maternal-uncle to the Queen, procured a recal of this award against a play which was in every respect truly inoffensive. But there was still a more insuperable obstacle to its success. The plot is flat and unsatisfactory, involving no great event, and in truth being only the question, whether Cleomenes should or should not depart upon an expedition, which appears far more hazardous than remaining where he was. The grave and stoical character of the hero is more suitable to the French than the English stage; nor had the general conduct

of the play that interest, or perhaps bustle, which is necessary to fix the attention of the promiscuous audience of London. In a theatre, where every man may, if he will, express his dissatisfaction, in defiance of *beaux esprits*, *nobles*, or *mousquetaires*, that which is dull will seldom be long fashionable: «Cleomenes» was accordingly coldly received. Dryden published it with a dedication to Lord Rochester, and the Life of Cleomenes prefixed, as translated from Plutarch by Creech, that it might appear how false those reports were, which imputed to him the composing a Jacobite play.

Omitting, for the present, Dryden's intermediate employments, I hasten to close his dramatic career, by mentioning, that «Love Triumphant,» his last play, was acted in 1692 with very bad success. Those who look over this piece, which is in truth one of the worst our author ever wrote, can be at no loss to discover sufficient reason for its condemnation. The comic part approaches to farce, and the tragic unites the wild and unnatural changes and counterchanges of the Spanish tragedy, with the involutions of unnatural and incestuous passion, which the British audience has been always averse to admit as a legitimate subject of dramatic pity or terror. But it cannot be supposed, that Dryden received the failure with any thing like an admission of its jus-

tice. He was a veteran foiled in the last of his theatrical trials of skill, and retreated for ever from the stage, with expressions which transferred the blame from himself to his judges; for, in the dedication to James, the fourth Earl of Salisbury, a relation of Lady Elizabeth, and connected with the poet by a similarity of religious and political opinions, he declares, that the characters of the persons in the drama are truly drawn, the fable not injudiciously contrived, the changes of fortune not unartfully managed, and the catastrophe happily introduced: thus leaving, were the author's opinion to be admitted as decisive, no grounds upon which the critics could ground their opposition. The enemies of Dryden, as usual, triumphed greatly in the fall of this piece;[1] and thus the dramatic career of Dryden began and closed with bad success.

[1] For example, in a Session of the Poets, under the fictitious name of Matthew Coppinger, Dryden is thus irreverently introduced:

> A reverend grisly elder first appear'd
> With solemn pace through the divided herd;
> Apollo, laughing at his clumsy mien,
> Prononced him straight the poets' alderman.
> His labouring muse did many years excel
> In ill inventing, and translating well,
> Till «Love Triumphant» did the cheat reveal.
> — — — — — — —
> So when appears, midst sprightly births, a sot,
> Whatever was the other offspring's lot,
> This we are sure was lawfully begot.

This Section cannot be more properly concluded than with the list which Mr Malone has drawn out of Dryden's plays, with the respective dates of their being acted and published; which is a correction and enlargement of that subjoined by the author himself to the opera of «Prince Arthur.» Henceforward we are to consider Dryden as unconnected with the stage.

	PLAYS.	Acted by	Entered at Stationers' Hall.	Published in
1.	The Wild Gallant. C..	The King's Servants.	Aug. 7, 1667.	1669.
2.	The Rival Ladies. T. C...	K. S.....	June 27, 1664.	1664.
3.	The Indian Emperor. T...	K. S.....	May 26, 1665.	1667.
4.	Secret Love, or The Maiden Queen. C....	K. S.....	Aug. 7, 1667.	1668.
5.	Sir Martin Mar-all. C.	The Duke of York's Servants.	June 24, 1668.	1668.
6.	The Tempest. C.....	D. S.....	Jan. 8, 1669-70.	1670.
7.	An Evening's Love, or The Mock Astrologer. C.	K. S.....	Nov. 20, 1668.	1671. Q. also 1668.
8.	Tyrannic Love, or The Royal Martyr. T....	K. S.....	July 14, 1669.	1670.
9. 10.	The Conquest of Granada, Two Parts. T..	K. S.....	Feb. 20, 1670-1.	1672.
11.	Marriage a la Mode. C..	K. S.....	Mar. 18, 1672-3.	1673.
12.	The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery. C.	K. S.....	Mar. 18, 1672-3.	1673.
13.	Amboyna. T.....	K. S.....	June 26, 1673.	1673.
14.	The State of Innocence. O.	.....	April 17, 1674.	1674.
15.	Aureng-Zebe. T.....	K. S.....	Nov. 29, 1675.	1676.
16.	All for Love. T.....	K. S.....	Jan. 31, 1677-8.	1678.
17.	The Kind Keeper, or Mr Limberham. C....	D. S.....	.....	1678.
18.	OEdipus. T.....	D. S.....	.....	1679.
19.	Troilus and Cressida. T..	D. S.....	April 14, 1679.	1679.
20.	The Spanish Friar. T. C..	D. S.....	.....	1681.
21.	The Duke of Guise. T..	The United Companies	.....	1683.
22.	Albion and Albanius. O..	U. C.....	.....	1685.
23.	Don Sebastian. T.....	U. C.....	.....	1690.
24.	Amphitryon. C.....	U. C.....	.....	1690.
25.	King Arthur. O.....	U. C.....	.....	1691.
26.	Cleomenes. T.....	U. C.....	.....	1692.
27.	Love Triumphant. T. C...	U. C.....	.....	1694.

SECTION VII.

State of Dryden's Connexions in Society after the Revolution—Juvenal and Persius—Smaller Pieces—Eleanora—Third Miscellany—Virgil—Ode to St Cecilia—Dispute with Milbourne—With Blackmore—Fables—The Author's Death and Funeral—His private Character—Notices of his Family.

THE evil consequences of the Revolution upon Dryden's character and fortunes began to abate sensibly within a year or two after that event. It is well known, that King William's popularity was as short-lived as it had been universal. All parties gradually drew off from the king, under their ancient standards. The clergy returned to their maxims of hereditary right, the Tories to their attachment to the house of Stuart, the Whigs to their jealousy of the royal authority. Dryden, we have already observed, so lately left in a small and detested party, was now associated among multitudes who, from whatever contradictory motives, were joined in opposition to the government. A reconcilia-

tion took place betwixt him and some of his kinsmen; particularly with John Driden of Chesterton, his first cousin; with whom, from about this period till his death, he lived upon terms of uninterrupted friendship. The influence of Clarendon and Rochester, the Queen's uncles, were, we have seen, often exerted in the poet's favour; and through them he became connected with the powerful families with which they were allied. Dorset, by whom he had been deprived of his office, seems to have softened this harsh, though indispensible, exertion of authority, by a liberal present; and to his bounty Dryden had frequently recourse in cases of emergency.[1]

[1] Such, I understand, is the general purport of some letters of Dryden's, in possession of the Dorset family, which contain certain particulars rendering them unfit for publication. Our author himself commemorates Dorset's generosity in the Essay on Satire, in the following affecting passage: «Though I must ever acknowledge, to the honour of your lordship, and the eternal memory of your charity, that since this Revolution, wherein I have patiently suffered the ruin of my small fortune, and the loss of that poor subsistence which I had from two kings, whom I had served more faithfully than profitable to myself—then your lordship was pleased, out of no other motive but your own nobleness, without any desert of mine, or the least solicitation from me, to make me a most bountiful present, which at that time, when I was most in want of it, came most seasonably and unexpectedly to my relief. That favour, my lord, is of itself sufficient to bind any grateful man to a perpetual acknowledgment, and to all the future

Indeed, upon one occasion it is said to have been administered in a mode savouring more of ostentation than delicacy; for there is a tradition, that Dryden and Tom Brown, being invited to dine with the Lord Chamberlain, found under their covers, the one a bank note for 100l., the other for 50l. I have already noticed, that these pecuniary benefactions were not held so degrading in that age as at present; and, probably, many of Dryden's opulent and noble friends took, like Dorset, occasional opportunities of supplying wants, which neither royal munificence, nor the favour of the public, now enabled the poet fully to provide for.

If Dryden's critical empire over literature was at any time interrupted by the mischances of his political party, it was in *abeyance* for a very short period; since, soon after the Revolution, he appears to have regained, and maintained till his death, that sort of authority in Will's coffee-house, to which we have frequently had occasion to allude. His supremacy, indeed, seems to have been so effectually established, that a «pinch out of Dryden's snuff-box,»[1] was equal to taking a

service which one of my mean condition can be ever able to perform. May the Almighty God return it for me, both in blessing you here, and rewarding you hereafter!»—*Essay on Satire.*

[1] So says Ward, in the London Spy.

degree in that academy of wit. Among those by whom it was frequented, Southerne and Congreve were principally distinguished by Dryden's friendship. His intimacy with the former, though oddly commenced, seems soon to have ripened into such sincere friendship, that the aged poet selected Southerne to finish «Cleomenes,» and addressed to him an epistle of condolence on the failure of «The Wives' Excuse,» which, as he delicately expresses it, «was with a kind civility dismissed» from the scene. This was indeed an occasion in which even Dryden could tell, from experience, how much the sympathy of friends was necessary to soothe the injured feelings of an author. But Congreve seems to have gained yet farther than Southerne upon Dryden's friendship. He was introduced to him by his first play, the celebrated «Old Bachelor,» being put into the poet's hands to be revised. Dryden, after making a few alterations to fit it for the stage, returned it to the author with the high and just commendation, that it was the best first play he had ever seen. In truth, it was impossible that Dryden could be insensible to the brilliancy of Congreve's comic dialogue, which has never been equalled by any English dramatist, unless by Mr Sheridan. Less can be said for the tragedies of Southerne, and for «The Mourning Bride.» Although these

pieces contain many passages of great interest, and of beautiful poetry, I know not but they contributed more than even the subsequent homilies of Rowe, to chase natural and powerful expression of passion from the English stage, and to sink it into that maudlin, and affected, and pedantic style of tragedy, which haunted the stage till Shakspeare awakened at the call of Garrick. «The Fatal Marriage» of Southerne is an exception to this false taste; for no one who has seen Mrs Siddons in Isabella, can deny Southerne the power of moving the passions, till amusement becomes bitter and almost insupportable distress. But these observations are here out of place. Addison paid an early tribute to Dryden's fame, by the verses addressed to him on his translations. Among Dryden's less distinguished intimates, we observe Sir Henry Shere, Dennis the critic, Moyle, Motteux, Walsh, who lived to distinguish the youthful merit of Pope, and other men of the second rank in literature. These, as his works testify, he frequently assisted with prefaces, occasional verses, or similar contributions. But among our author's followers and admirers, we must not reckon Swift, although related to him,[1] and now

[1] «Dryden, though my near relation,» says Swift, «is one whom I have often blamed, as well as pitied.» Mr Malone traces their consanguinity to Swift's grandmother,

coming into notice. It is said, that Swift had subjected to his cousin's perusal, some of those performances, which he entitled

Elizabeth Dryden, being the daughter of a brother of Sir Erasmus Driden, the poet's grandfather: so that the Dean of St Patrick's was the son of Dryden's second cousin, which, in Scotland, would even yet be deemed a near relation. The passages in prose and verse, in which Swift reflects on Dryden, are various. He mentions, in his best poem, «The Rhapsody,»

> ———————— The prefaces of Dryden,
> For these our critics much confide in,
> Though merely writ at first for filling,
> To raise the volume's price a shilling.

He introduces Dryden in «The Battle of the Books,» with a most irreverent description of his person and arms; and many of the brilliant touches which Swift throws out in the following assumed character of a hack author, are directed expressly against our poet. The malignant allusions to merits, to sufferings, to changes of opinion, to political controversies, and a peaceful conscience, cannot be mistaken. The piece was probably composed *flagrante odio,* for it occurs in the Introduction to «The Tale of a Tub,» which was written about 1692.

«These notices may serve to give the learned reader an idea, as well as taste, of what the whole work is likely to produce, wherein I have now altogether circumscribed my thoughts and my studies; and, if I can bring it to a perfection before I die, I shall reckon I have well employed the poor remains of an unfortunate life. This indeed is more than I can justly expect, from a quill worn to the pith in the service of the state, in *pros* and *cons* upon popish plots, and meal tubs, and exclusion bills, and passive obedience, and addresses of lives and fortunes, and prerogative, and property, and liberty of conscience, and let-

Odes, compositions in which the young author had widely mistaken the nature of his own genius. Even the eye of Dryden was unable to discover the wit and the satirist in the clouds of incomprehensible pindaric obscurity in which he was enveloped; and the aged bard pronounced the hasty, and never to be pardoned sentence, — « Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet. » A doom which he, on whom it was passed, attempted to repay, by repeated, although impotent attacks upon the fame of Dryden, every where scattered through his works. With the exception of Swift, no author of eminence, whose labours are still in request, has ventured to assail the poetical fame of Dryden.

Shortly after the Revolution, Dryden had translated several satires of Juvenal; and calling in the aid of his two sons, of Congreve,

ters to a friend; from an understanding and a conscience, threadbare and ragged with perpetual turning; from a head broken in a hundred places by the malignants of the opposite factions; and from a body spent with poxes ill cured, by trusting to bawds and surgeons, who, as it afterwards appeared, were professed enemies to me and the government, and revenged their party's quarrel upon my nose and shins. Fourscore and eleven pamphlets have I written under three reigns, and for the service of six and thirty factions. But finding the state has no farther occasion for me and my ink, I retire willingly to draw it out into speculations more becoming a philosopher; having, to my unspeakable comfort, passed a long life with a conscience void of offence.»

Creech, Tate, and others, he was enabled, in 1692, to give a complete version both of that satirist, and of Persius. In this undertaking he himself bore a large share, translating the whole of Persius, with the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires of Juvenal. To this version is prefixed the noted Essay on Satire, inscribed to the Earl of Dorset and Middlesex. In that treatise, our author exhibits a good deal of that sort of learning which was in fashion among the French critics; and, I suspect, was contented rather to borrow something from them, than put himself to the trouble of compiling more valuable materials. Such is the disquisition concerning the origin of the word *Satire*, which is chiefly extracted from Casaubon, Dacier, and Rigault. But the poet's own incidental remarks upon the comparative merits of Horace, Juvenal, and Persius, his declamation against the abuse of satire, his incidental notices respecting epic poetry, translation, and English literature in general, render this introduction highly valuable.

Without noticing the short prefaces to Walsh's «Essay upon Woman,» a meagre and stiff composition, and to Sir Henry Shere's wretched translation of Polybius, published in 1691 and 1692, we hasten to the elegy on the Countess of Abingdon, entitled Eleonora. This lady died suddenly, 31st May 1691, in

a ball-room in her own house, just then prepared for an entertainment. The disconsolate husband, who seems to have been a patron of the Muses,[1] not satisfied with the volunteer effusions of some minor poets, employed a mutual friend to engage Dryden to compose a more beautiful tribute to his consort's memory. The poet, it would seem, neither knew the lord nor the lady, but was doubtless propitiated with a proper and satisfactory offering upon the mournful occasion;[2] nor was the application and fee judged more extraordinary than that probably offered, on

[1] Robert Gould, author of that scandalous lampoon against Dryden, entitled «The Laureat,» inscribes his collection of poems, printed 1688-89, to the Earl of Abingdon; and it contains some pieces addressed to him and to his lady. He survived also to compose, on the Earl's death, in 1700, «The Mourning Swan,» an eclogue to his memory, in which a shepherd gives the following account of the proximate cause of that event:

> *Menalcas.* To tell you true (whoe'er it may displease),
> He died of the *Physician*—a disease
> That long has reigned, and eager of renown,
> More than a plague depopulates the town.
> Inflamed with wine, and blasting at a breath,
> All its *prescriptions* are receipts for death.
> Millions of mischiefs by its rage are wrought,
> Safe where 'tis fled, but barbarous where 'tis sought;
> A cursed ingrateful ill, that call'd to aid,
> Is still most fatal where it best is paid.

[2] How far this was necessary, the reader may judge from Mirana, a funeral eclogue; sacred to the memory

the same occasion, to the divine who was to preach the Countess's funeral sermon. The leading and most characteristic features of the lady's character were doubtless pointed out to our author as subjects for illustration; yet so difficult is it, even for the best poet, to feign a sorrow which he feels not, or to describe with appropriate and animated colouring a person whom he has never seen, that Dryden's poem resembles rather an abstract panegyric on an imaginary being, than an elegy on a real character. The elegy was published early in 1692.

In 1693, Tonson's Third Miscellany made its appearance, with a dedication to Lord Ratcliffe, eldest son of the Earl of Derwentwater, who was himself a pretender to poetry, though our author thought so slightly of his attempts in that way, that he does not even deign to make them enter into his panegyric, but contents himself with saying, «what you

of that excellent lady, Eleonora, late Countess of Abingdon, 1691, 4th August, which concludes with the following singular *imprecation:*

« Here, friend, my sacred imprecation hear,
And let both of us kneel, and both be bare.
Doom me (ye powers) to misery and shame,
Let mine be the most ignominious name,
Let me, each day, be with new griefs perplext,
Curst in this life, nor blessed in the next,
If I believe the like of her survives,
Or if I think her not the best of mothers, and of wives.»

will be hereafter may be more than guessed by what you are at present.» It is probable that the rhyming peer was dissatisfied with Dryden's unusual economy of adulation; at least he disappointed some expectations which the poet and bookseller seem to have entertained of his liberality.[1] This dedication indicates, that a quarrel was commenced between our author and the critic Rymer. It appears from a passage in a letter to Tonson, that Rymer had spoken lightly of him in his last critique (probably in the short view of tragedy), and that the poet took this opportunity, as he himself expresses it, to snarl again. He therefore acquaints us roundly, that the corruption of a poet was the generation of a critic; exults a little over the memory of Rymer's «Edgar,» a tragedy just reeking from damnation; and hints at the difference which the public is likely to experience between the present royal historiographer and him whose room he occupied. In

[1] 30th August, 1693, Dryden writes to Tonson, «I am sure you thought my Lord Radclyffe would have done something; I guessed more truly, that he could not.» The expression, perhaps, applies rather to his lordship's want of ability than inclination; and Dryden says indeed, in the dedication, that it is in his nature to be an encourager of good poets, though fortune has not yet put into his hands the power of expressing it. In a letter to Mrs Steward, Dryden speaks of Ratcliffe as a poet, «and none of the best.»

his epistle to Congreve, alluding to the same circumstance of Rymer's succeeding to the office of historiographer, as Tate did to the laurel, on the death of Thomas Shadwell, in 1692, Dryden has these humorous lines:

> O that your brows my laurel had sustain'd!
> Well had I been deposed, if you had reign'd:
> The father had descended for the son;
> For only you are lineal to the throne.
> Thus, when the state one Edward did depose,
> A greater Edward in his room arose:
> But now not I, but poetry, is cursed;
> For Tom the second reigns like Tom the first.
> But let them not mistake my patron's part,
> Nor call his charity their own desert.

From the letter to Tonson above referred to, it would seem that the dedication of the Third Miscellany gave offence to Queen Mary, being understood to reflect upon her government, and that she had commanded Rymer to return to the charge, by a criticism on Dryden's plays. But the breach does not appear to have become wider; and Dryden has elsewhere mentioned Rymer with civility.

The Third Miscellany contained, of Dryden's poetry, a few Songs, the First Book, with part of the Ninth and Sixteenth Books of the Metamorphoses, and the parting of Hector and Andromache, from the Iliad. It was also to have had the poem of Hero and Leander, from the Greek; but none such ap-

peared, nor is it clear whether Dryden ever executed the version, or only had it in contemplation. The contribution, although ample, was not satisfactory to old Jacob Tonson, who wrote on the subject a most mercantile expostulatory letter to Dryden, which is fortunately still preserved, as a curious specimen of the minutiæ of a literary bargain in the 17th century. Tonson, with reference to Dryden having offered a strange bookseller six hundred lines for twenty guineas, enters into a question in the rule of three, by which he discovers, and proves, that for fifty guineas he has only 1446 lines, which he seems to take more unkindly, as he had not *counted* the lines until he had paid the money; from all which Jacob infers, that Dryden ought, out of generosity, at least to throw him in something to the bargain, especially as he had used him more kindly in Juvenal, which, saith the said Jacob, is not reckoned so easy to translate as Ovid. What weight was given to this supplication does not appear; probably very little, for the translations were not extended, and as to getting back any part of the copy-money, it is not probable Tonson's most sanguine expectations ever reached that point. Perhaps the songs were thrown in as a make-weight. There was a Fourth Miscellany published in 1694; but to this Dryden only gave a version of the Third Georgic, and his Epitle

to Sir Godfrey Kneller, the requital of a copy of the portrait of Shakspeare.[1]

In 1693, Dryden addressed the beautiful lines to Congreve, on the cold reception of his «Double Dealer.» He was himself under a similar cloud, from the failure of «Love Triumphant,» and therefore in a fit mood to administer consolation to his friend. The epistle contains, among other striking passages, the affecting charge of the care of his posthumous fame, which Congreve did not forget when Dryden was no more.

But, independently of occasional exertions, our author, now retired from the stage, had bent his thoughts upon one great literary task, the translation of Virgil. This weighty and important undertaking was probably suggested by the experience of Tonson, the success of whose «Miscellanies» had taught him the value placed by the public on Dryden's translations from the classics. From hints thrown out by contemporary authors, there is reason to think that this scheme was meditated, even before 1694; but in that year the poet, in a letter to Dennis, speaks of it as under his immediate contemplation. The names of Virgil and of Dryden were talismans powerful to arrest all the literature of England, and fix

[1] Copied from the Chandos picture. Kneller's copy is now at Wentworth-House, the seat of Earl Fitzwilliam.

universal attention upon the progress of the work. Mr Malone has recorded the following particulars concerning it, with pious enthusiasm.

«Dr Johnson has justly remarked, that the nation seemed to consider its honour interested in the event. Mr Gilbert Dolben gave him the various editions of his author: Dr Knightly Chetwood furnished him with the Life of Virgil, and the Preface to the Pastorals; and Addison supplied the arguments of the several books, and an Essay on the Georgics. The first lines of this great poet which he translated, he wrote with a diamond on a pane of glass in one of the windows of Chesterton-house, in Huntingdonshire, the residence of his kinsman and namesake, John Driden, Esq.[1] The version of the first Georgic, and a great part of the last Æneid, was made at Denham-Court, in Buckinghamshire, the seat of Sir William Bowyer, Baronet; and the seventh Æneid was translated at Burleigh, the noble mansion of the Earl of Exeter. These circumstances, which must be acknowledged to be of no great importance, I yet have thought it proper to record, because they will for ever endear those places to the votaries of the Muses, and add to them a kind of

[1] The antiquary may now search in vain for this frail memorial; for the house of Chesterton was, in 1807, pulled down for the sake of the materials.

celebrity, which neither the beauties of nature, nor the exertions of art, can bestow.»

Neither was the liberality of the nation entirely disproportioned to the general importance attached to the translation of Virgil by so eminent a poet. The researches of Mr Malone have ascertained, in some degree, the terms. There were two classes of subscribers, the first set of whom paid five guineas a-piece to adorn the work with engravings; beneath each of which, in due and grateful remembrance, was blazoned the arms of a subscriber: this class amounted to one hundred and one persons, and presents an assemblage of noble names, few of whom are distinguished more to their credit than by the place they there occupy. The second subscribers were two hundred and fifty in number, at two guineas each. But from these sums was to be deduced the expense of the engravings, though these were only the plates used for Ogilby's Virgil, a little retouched. Besides the subscriptions, it would seem, that Dryden received from Tonson fifty pounds for each Book of the «Georgics» and «Æneid,» and probably the same for the «Pastorals» collectively. On the other hand, it is probable, that Jacob charged a price for the copies delivered to the subscribers, which, with the expense of the plates, reduced Dryden's profit to about twelve or thirteen hun-

dred pounds;—a trifling sum when compared to what Pope received for the «Iliad,» which was certainly between 5000l. and 6000l.; yet great in proportion to what the age of Dryden had ever afforded, as an encouragement to literature. It must indeed be confessed, that the Revolution had given a new impulse and superior importance to literary pursuits. The semi-barbarous age, which succeeded the great Civil War, had been civilized, but by slow degrees. It is true, the king and courtiers, among their disorderly and dissolute pleasures, enumerated songs and plays, and, in the course of their political intrigues, held satires in request; but they had neither money nor time to spare for the encouragement or study of any of the higher and more elaborate departments of poetry. Meanwhile, the bulk of the nation neglected verse, as what they could not understand, or, with puritanical bigotry, detested as sinful the use, as well as the abuse, of poetical talent. But the lapse of thirty years made a material change in the manners of the English people. Instances began to occur of individuals who, rising at first into notice for their proficience in the fine arts, were finally promoted for their active and penetrating talents, which necessarily accompany a turn towards them. An outward reformation of manners, at least the general abjuration of

grosser profligacy, was also favourable to poetry,—

Still first to fly where sensual joys invade.

This was wrought, partly by the religious manners of Mary; partly by the cold and unsocial temper of William, who shunned excess, not perhaps because it was criminal, but because it was derogatory; partly by the political fashion of the day, which was to disown the profligacy that marked the partisans of the Stuarts; but, most of all, by the general increase of good taste, and the improvement of education. All these contributed to the encouragement of Dryden's great undertaking, which promised to rescue Virgil from the degraded version of Ogilby, and present him in a becoming form to a public, now prepared to receive him with merited admiration.

While our author was labouring in this great work, and the public were waiting the issue with impatience and attention, a feud, of which it is now impossible to trace the cause, arose between the bard and his publisher. Their union before seems to have been of a nature more friendly than interest alone could have begotten; for Dryden, in one letter, talks with gratitude of Tonson's affording him his company down to Northamptonshire; and this friendly intimacy Jacob

neglected not to cultivate, by those occasional compliments of fruit and wine, which are often acknowledged in the course of their correspondence. But a quarrel broke out between them, when the translation of Virgil had advanced so far as the completion of the seventh Æneid; at which period Dryden charges Tonson bitterly with an intention, from the very beginning, to deprive him of all profit by the second subscriptions; alluding, I presume, to the price which the bookseller charged him upon the volumes delivered to the subscribers. The bibliopolist seems to have bent before the storm, and pacified the incensed bard, by verbal submission, though probably without relaxing his exactions and drawbacks in any material degree. Another cause of this dissension appears to have been the Notes upon «Virgil,» for which Tonson would allow no additional emolument to the author, although Dryden says, «that to make them good, would cost six months labour at least;» and elsewhere tells Tonson ironically, that, since not to be paid for, they shall be short, «for the saving of paper.» I cannot think that we have sustained any great loss by Tonson's penurious economy on this occasion. In his prefaces and dedications, Dryden let his own ideas freely forth to the public; but in his Notes upon the Classics, witness those on «Juvenal» and «Persius,» he

neither indulged in critical dissertations on particular beauties and defects, nor in general remarks upon the kind of poetry before him; but contented himself with rendering into English the antiquarian dissertations of Dacier and other foreign commentators, with now and then an explanatory paraphrase of an obscure passage. The parodies of Martin Scriblerus had not yet consigned to ridicule the verbal criticism, and solemn trifling, with which the ancient schoolmen pretended to illustrate the classics. But beside the dispute about the notes in particular, and the various selfish advantages which Dryden suspected Tonson of attempting to secure in the course of the transaction, he seems to have been particularly affronted at a presumptuous plan of that publisher (a keen Whig, and secretary of the Kit-cat club), to drive him into inscribing the translation of Virgil to King William. With this view, Tonson had an especial care to make the engraver aggravate the nose of Æneas in the plates into a sufficient resemblance of the hooked promontory of the Deliverer's countenance;[1] and,

[1] This gave rise to a good epigram:

« Old Jacob, by deep judgment sway'd,
To please the wise beholders,
Has placed old Nassau's hook-nosed head
On poor Æneas' shoulders.

foreseeing Dryden's repugnance to his favourite plan, he had recourse, it would seem, to more unjustifiable means to further it; for the poet expresses himself, as convinced that, through Tonson's means, his correspondence with his sons, then at Rome, was intercepted.[1] I suppose Jacob, having fairly laid siege to his author's conscience, had no scruple to intercept all foreign supplies, which might have confirmed him in his pertinacity. But Dryden, although thus closely beleaguered, held fast his integrity; and no prospect of personal advantage, or importunity on the part of Tonson, could induce him to take a step inconsistent with his religious and political sentiments. It was probably during the

> « To make the parallel hold tack,
> Methinks there 's little lacking;
> One took his father pick-a-pack,
> And t' other sent his packing. »

[1] «I am of your opinion,» says the poet to his son Charles, «that, by Tonson's means, almost all our letters have miscarried for this last year. But, however, he has missed of his design in the dedication, though he had prepared the book for it; for, in every figure of Æneas, he has caused him to be drawn, like King William, with a hooked nose.»—Dryden hints to Tonson himself his suspicion of this unworthy device, desiring him to forward a letter to his son Charles, but not by post. «Being satisfied, that Ferrand will do by this as he did by two letters which I sent my sons, about my dedicating to the king, of which they received neither.»

course of these bickerings with his publisher, that Dryden, incensed at some refusal of accommodation on the part of Tonson, sent him three well-known coarse and forcible satirical lines, descriptive of his personal appearance:

«With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair,
With two left legs, and Judas-colour'd hair,
And frowzy pores, that taint the ambient air.»

« Tell the dog.» said the poet to the messenger, « that he who wrote these can write more.» But Tonson, perfectly satisfied with this single triplet, hastened to comply with the author's request, without requiring any further specimen of his poetical powers. It would seem, on the other hand, that when Dryden neglected his stipulated labour, Tonson possessed powers of animadversion, which, though exercised in plain prose, were not a little dreaded by the poet. Lord Bolingbroke, already a votary of the muses, and admitted to visit their high priest, was wont to relate, that one day he heard another person enter the house. « This,» said Dryden, « is Tonson: you will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and, if you leave me unprotected, I shall suffer all the

rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue.»[1]

But whatever occasional subjects of dissention arose between Dryden and his bookseller, mutual interest, the strongest of ties, appears always to have brought them together, after the first ebullition of displeasure had subsided. There might, on such occasions, be room for acknowledging faults on both sides; for, if we admit that the bookseller was penurious and churlish, we cannot deny that Dryden seems often to have been abundantly captious, and irascible. Indeed, as the poet placed, and justly, more than a mercantile value upon what he sold, the trader, on his part, was necessarily cautious not to afford a price which his returns could not pay; so that while, in one point of view, the author sold at an inadequate price, the purchaser, in another, really got no more than value for his money. That literature is ill recompensed, is usually rather the fault of the public than the bookseller, whose trade can only exist by buying that which can be sold to advantage. The trader who purchased the «Paradise Lost» for ten pounds had probably no very good bargain.

However fretted by these teazing and almost humiliating discussions, Dryden conti-

[1] Johnson's «Life of Dryden.»

nued steadily advancing in his great labour; and about three years after it had been undertaken, the translation of Virgil, « the most noble and spirited,» said Pope, « which I know in any language,» was given to the public in July 1697. So eager was the general expectation, that the first edition was exhausted in a few months, and a second published early in the next year. « It satisfied,» says Johnson, « his friends, and, for the most part, silenced his enemies.» But, although this was generally the case, there wanted not some to exercise the invidious task of criticism, or rather of malevolent detraction. Among those, the highest name is that of Swift; the most distinguished for venomous and persevering malignity, that of Milbourne.

In his Epistle to Prince Posterity, prefixed to the «Tale of a Tub,» Swift, in the character of the dedicator, declares, « upon the word of a sincere man, that there is now actually in being a certain poet called John Dryden, whose translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large folio, well bound, and, if diligent search were made, for aught I know, is yet to be seen.» In his « Battle of the Books,» he tells us, « that Dryden, who encountered Virgil, soothed the good ancient by the endearing title of «father,» and, by a large deduction of genealogies, made it appear, that they were nearly related, and humbly pro-

posed an exchange of armour: as a mark of hospitality, Virgil consented, though his was of gold, and cost an hundred beeves, the other's but of rusty iron. However, this glittering armour became the modern still worse than his own. Then they agreed to exchange horses; but, when it came to the trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount.» A yet more bitter reproach is levelled by the wit against the poet, for his triple dedication of the Pastorals, Georgics, and Æneid, to three several patrons, Clifford, Chesterfield, and Mulgrave.[1] But, though the

[1] «I confess to have been somewhat liberal in the business of titles, having observed the humour of multiplying them to bear great vogue among certain writers, whom I exceedingly reverence. And indeed it seems not unreasonable, that books, the children of the brain, should have the honour to be christened with variety of names, as well as other infants of quality. Our famous Dryden has ventured to proceed a point farther, endeavouring to introduce also a multiplicity of god-fathers; which is an improvement of much more advantage, upon a very obvious account. It is a pity this admirable invention has not been better cultivated, so as to grow by this time into general imitation, when such an authority serves it for a precedent. Nor have my endeavours been wanting to second so useful an example: but, it seems, there is an unhappy expense usually annexed to the calling of a god-father, which was clearly out of my head, as it is very reasonable to believe. Where the pinch lay, I cannot certainly affirm; but, having employed a world of thoughts and pains to split my treatise into forty sections, and

recollection of the contemned Odes, like the *spretæ injuria formæ* of Juno, still continued to prompt these overflowings of Swift's satire, he had too much taste and perception of poetry to attempt, gravely, to undermine, by a formal criticism, the merits of Dryden's Virgil.

This was reserved for Luke Milbourne, a clergyman, who, by that assurance, has consigned his name to no very honourable immortality. This person appears to have had a living at Great Yarmouth,[1] which, Dryden hints, he forfeited by writing libels on his parishioners; and from another testimony, he seems to have been a person of no very strict morals.[2] Milbourne was once an admirer of our poet, as appears from his letter concern-

having entreated forty lords of my acquaintance, that they would do me the honour to stand, they all made it a matter of conscience, and sent me their excuses.»

[1] Besides the notes on Virgil, he wrote many single sermons, and a metrical version of the psalms, and died in 1720.

[2] He is described as a rake, in «The Pacificator,» a poem bought by Mr Luttrel, 15th February 1699-1700, which gives an account of a supposed battle between the men of wit and men of sense, as the poet calls them:

> M———n, a renegade from wit, came on,
> And made a false attack, and next to none;
> The hypocrite, in sense, could not conceal
> What pride, and want of brains, obliged him to reveal.
> In him, the critic's ruin'd by the poet,
> And Virgil gives his testimony to it.

4.

ing «Amphitryon.» But either poetical rivalry, for he had also thought of translating Virgil himself,[1] or political animosity, for he seems to have held revolution principles, or deep resentment for Dryden's sarcasms against the clergy, or, most probably, all these united, impelled Milbourne to publish a most furious criticism, entitled, «Notes on Dryden's Virgil, in a Letter to a Friend.» «And here,» said he, «in the first place, I must needs own Jacob Tonson's ingenuity to be greater than the

> The troops of wit were so enraged to see
> This priest invade his own fraternity,
> They sent a party out, by silence led,
> And, without answer, shot the turn-coat dead.
> The priest, the rake, the wit, strove all in vain,
> For there, alas! he lies among the slain.
> *Memento mori*—see the consequence,
> When rakes and wits set up for men of sense.

[1] This Mr Malone has proved by the following extract from Motteux's «Gentleman's Journal.» «That best of poets (says Motteux) having so long continued a stranger to tolerable English, Mr Milbourne pitied his hard fate; and seeing that several great men had undertaken some episodes of his Æneïs, without any design of Englishing the whole, he gave us the first book of it some years ago, with a design to go through the poem. It was the misfortune of that first attempt to appear just about the time of the late Revolution, when few had leisure to mind such books; yet, though by reason of his absence, it was printed with a world of faults, those that are sufficient judges have done it the justice to esteem it a very successful attempt, and cannot but wish that he would complete the entire translation.»—*Gent. Journ.* for August, 1692.

translator's, who, in the inscription of his fine gay (title) in the front of the book, calls it very honestly Dryden's Virgil, to let the reader know, that this is not that Virgil so much admired in the Augustæan age, an author whom Mr Dryden once thought untranslatable, but a Virgil of another stamp, of a coarser alloy; a silly, impertinent, nonsensical writer, of a various and uncertain style, a mere Alexander Ross, or somebody inferior to him; who could never have been known again in the translation, if the name of Virgil had not been bestowed upon him in large characters in the frontispiece, and in the running title. Indeed, there is scarce the *magni nominis umbra* to be met with in this translation, which being fairly intimated by Jacob, he needs add no more, but *si populus vult decipi, decipiatur.*»

With an assurance which induced Pope to call him the fairest of critics, not content with criticising the production of Dryden, Milbourne was so ill advised as to produce, and place in opposition to it, a ricketty translation of his own, probably the fragments of that which had been suppressed by Dryden's version. A short specimen, both of his criticism and poetry, will convince the reader, that the powers of the former were, as has been often the case, neutralized by the insipidity of the latter; for who can rely on the judgment of a critic so ill qualified to illustrate his own pre-

cepts? I take the remarks on the tenth Eclogue, as a specimen, at hazard. « This eclogue is translated in a strain too luscious and effeminate for Virgil, who might bemoan his friend, but does it in a noble and a manly style, which Mr Ogilby answers better than Mr D., whose paraphrase looks like one of Mrs Behn's, when somebody had turned the original into English prose before.

« Where Virgil says,

Lauri et myricæ flevére,

the figure 's beautiful; where Mr D. says,

————the laurel stands in tears,
And hung with humid pearls, the lowly shrub appears,

the figure is lost, and a foolish and impertinent representation comes in its place; an ordinary dewy morning might fill the laurels and shrubs with Mr D.'s tears, though Gallus had not been concerned in it.

And yet the queen of beauty blest his bed—

« Here Mr D. comes with his ugly patch upon a beautiful face: what had the queen of beauty to do here? Lycoris did not despise her lover for his meanness, but because she had a mind to be a Catholic whore. Gallus was of quality, but her spark a poor inferior fellow. And yet the queen of beauty, etc.

would have followed there very well, but not where wanton Mr D. has fixt her.

Flush'd were his cheeks, and glowing were his eyes.

« This character is fitter for one that is drunk than one in an amazement, and is a thought unbecoming Virgil.

And for thy rival, tempts the raging sea,
The forms of horrid war, and heaven's inclemency.

« Lycoris, doubtless, was a jilting baggage, but why should Mr D. belie her? Virgil talks nothing of her going to sea, and perhaps she had a mind to be only a camp laundress, which office she might be advanced to without going to sea: the forms of horrid war, for *horrida castra*, is incomparable.

——— his brows, a country crown
Of fennel and of nodding lilies drown,

is a very odd figure: Sylvanus had swinging brows to drown such a crown as that, *i. e.* to make it invisible, to swallow it up; if it be a country crown, drown his brows, it is false English.

The meads are sooner drunk with morning dews.

« *Rivi* signifies no such thing; but then, that bees should be drunk with flowery shrubs, or goats be drunk with brouze, for drunk 's the verb, is a very quaint thought.»

After much more to the same purpose, Milbourne thus introduces his own version of the first Eclogue, with a confidence worthy of a better cause:—«That Mr Dryden might be satisfied that I 'd offer no foul play, nor find faults in him, without giving him an opportunity of retaliation, I have subjoined another metaphrase or translation of the First and Fourth Pastoral, which I desire may be read with his by the original.

TITYRUS.

ECLOGUE I.

«*Mel.* Beneath a spreading beech you, Tityrus, lie,
And country songs to humble reeds apply;
We our sweet fields, our native country fly,
We leave our country; you in shades may lie,
And Amaryllis fair and blythe proclaim,
And make the woods repeat her buxom name.

Tit. O Melibæus! 't was a bounteous God,
These peaceful play-days on our muse bestow'd;
At least, he 'st alway be a God to me;
My lambs shall oft his grateful offerings be.
Thou seest, he lets my herds securely stray,
And me at pleasure on my pipe to play.

«*Mel.* Your peace I don't with looks of envy view,
But I admire your happy state, and you.
In all our farms severe distraction reigns,
No ancient owner there in peace remains.
Sick, I, with much ado, my goats can drive,
This, Tityrus, I scarce can lead alive;
On the bare stones, among yon hazels past,
Just now, alas! her hopeful twins she cast.

Yet had not all on 's dull and senseless been,
We 'd long agon this coming stroke foreseen.
Oft did the blasted oaks our fate unfold,
And boding choughs from hollow trees foretold.
But say, good Tityrus! tell me who 's the God,
Who peace, so lost to us, on you bestow'd?»

Some critics there were, though but few, who joined Milbourne in his abortive attempt to degrade our poet's translation. Oldmixon, celebrated for his share in the games of the Dunciad,[1] and Samuel Par-

[1] See the Preface to «A Funeral Idyll, sacred to the glorious Memory of King William III.» by Mr Oldmixon. «In the Idyll on the peace, I made the first essay to throw off rhymes, and the kind reception that poem met with has encouraged me to attempt it again. I have not been persuaded by my friends to change the title of Idyll into Idyllium; for having an English word set me by Mr Dryden, which he uses indifferently with the Greek, I thought it might be as proper in an English poem. I shall not be solicitous to justify myself to those who except against his authority, till they produce me a better: I have heard him blamed for his innovations and coining of words, even by persons who have already been sufficiently guilty of the fault they lay to his charge; and shown us what we are to expect from them, were their names as well settled as his. If I had qualifications enough to do it successfully, I should advise them to write more naturally, delicately, and reasonably themselves, before they attack Mr Dryden's reputation: and to think there is something more necessary to make a man write well, than the favour of the great, or the success of a faction. We have every year seen how fickle Fortune has been to her declared favourites; and men of merit, as well as he

ker,[1] a yet more obscure name, have informed us of this, by volunteering in Dry-

who has none, have suffered by her inconstancy, as much as they got by her smiles. This should alarm such as are eminently indebted to her, and may be of use to them in their future reflections on others' productions, not to assume too much to themselves from her partiality to them, lest, when they are left like their predecessor, it should only serve to render them the more ridiculous.»

[1] «Homer in a Nutshell,» (16 Feb.) 1700-9, by Samuel Parker, Gent.

«*Preface.*—Ever since I caught some termagant ones in a club, undervaluing our new translation of Virgil, I 've known both what opinion I ought to harbour, and what use to make of them; and since the opportunity of a digression so luckily presents itself, I shall make bold to ask the gentlemen their sentiments of two or three lines (to pass over a thousand other instances) which they may meet with in that work. The fourth Æneid says of Dido, after certain effects of her taking shelter with Æneas in the cave appear,

Conjugium vocat, hoc prætexit nomine culpam, V. 172.

which Mr Dryden renders thus:

She call'd it marriage, by that specious name
To veil the crime, and sanctify the shame.

Nor had he before less happily rendered the 39th verse of the second Æneid:

Scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus.

The giddy vulgar, as their fancies guide,
With noise, say nothing, and in parts divide.

«If these are the lines which they call flat and spiritless, I wish mine could be flat and spiritless too! And, there-

den's defence. But Dryden needed not their assistance. The real excellencies of his version were before the public, and it was rather to clear himself from the malignant charges against his moral principles, which Milbourne had mingled with his criticism, than for any other purpose, that the poet deemed his antagonist worthy of the following animadversion:—"Milbourne, who is in orders, pretends amongst the rest this quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul on priesthood: if I have, I am only to ask pardon

fore, to make short work, I shall only beg Mr Dryden's leave to congratulate him upon his admirable flatness, and dulness, in a rapture of poetical indignation:

Then dares the poring critic snarl? And dare
The *puny brats [1] of Momus threaten war?
And can't the proud perverse Arachne's fate
Deter the *mongrels ere it prove too late?
In vain, alas! we warn the *harden'd brood;
In vain expect they'll ever come to good.
No: they'd conceive more venom if they could.
But let each *viper at his peril bite,
While you defy the most ingenious spite.
So Parian columns, raised with costly care,
*Vile snails and worms may daub, yet not impair.
While the tough titles, and obdurate rhyme,
Fatigue the busy grinders of old Time.
Not but your Maro justly may complain,
Since your translation ends his ancient reign,
And but by your officious muse outvied,
That vast immortal name had never died.

[1] I desire these appellations may not seem to affect the parties concerned, any otherwise than as to their character of critics.

of good priests, and am afraid his part of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied, that he shall not be able to force himself upon me for an adversary. I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him. His own translations of Virgil have answered his criticisms on mine. If (as they say, he has declared in print) he prefers the version of Ogilby to mine, the world has made him the same compliment; for it is agreed on all hands, that he writes even below Ogilby. That, you will say, is not easily to be done; but what cannot Milbourne bring about? I am satisfied, however, that while he and I live together, I shall not be thought the worst poet of the age. It looks as if I had desired him underhand to write so ill against me; but, upon my honest word, I have not bribed him to do me this service, and am wholly guiltless of his pamphlet. It is true, I should be glad if I could persuade him to continue his good offices, and write such another critique on any thing of mine; for I find, by experience, he has a great stroke with the reader, when he condemns any of my poems, to make the world have a better opinion of them. He has taken some pains with my poetry; but nobody will be persuaded to take the same with his. If I had taken to the church (as he affirms, but which was never in my thoughts), I should have had

more sense, if not more grace, than to have turned myself out of my benefice, by writing libels on my parishioners. But his account of my manners, and my principles, are of a piece with his cavils and his poetry; and so I have done with him for ever.»[1]

While Dryden was engaged with his great translation, he found two months leisure to execute a prose version of « Fresnoy's Art of Painting,» to which he added an ingenious Preface, the work of twelve mornings, containing a parallel between that art and poetry; of which Mason has said, that though too superficial to stand the test of strict criticism, yet it will always give pleasure to readers of taste, even when it fails to convince their judgment. This version appeared in 1695. Mr Malone conjectures, that our author was engaged in this task by his friends Closterman and Sir Godfrey Kneller, artists, who had been active in procuring subscriptions for his Virgil. He also wrote a « Life of Lucian,» for a translation of his works, by Mr Walter Moyle, Sir Henry Shere, and other gentlemen of pretension to learning. This version, although it did not appear till after his death, and although he executed no part of the translation, still retains the title of « Dryden's Lucian.»

There was one event of political importance

[1] Preface to the Fables.

which occurred in December 1695, and which the public seem to have expected should have employed the pen of Dryden;—this was the death of Mary, wife of William the Third. It is difficult to conceive in what manner the poet-laureat of the unfortunate James could have treated the memory of his daughter. Satire was dangerous, and had indeed been renounced by the poet; and panegyric was contrary to the principles for which he was suffering. Yet, among the swarm of rhymers who thrust themselves upon the nation on that mournful occasion, there are few who do not call, with friendly or unfriendly voice, upon our poet to break silence. But the voice of praise and censure was heard in vain, and Dryden's only interference was, in character of the first judge of his time, to award the prize to the Duke of Devonshire, as author of the best poem composed on the occasion of the Queen's death.[1]

[1] This I learn from *Honori Sacellum*, a Funeral Poem, to the Memory of William, Duke of Devonshire, 1707:

'T was so, when the destroyer's dreadful dart
Once pierced through ours, to fair Maria's heart.
From his state-helm then some short hours he stole,
'T indulge his melting eyes, and bleeding soul:
Whilst his bent knees, to those remains divine,
Paid their last offering to that royal shrine.

On which lines occurs this explanatory note:—"An Ode, composed by His Grace, on the death of the late Queen Mary, justly adjudged by the ingenious Mr Dryden to have exceeded all that had been written on that occasion."

Virgil was hardly finished, when our author distinguished himself by the immortal Ode to Saint Cecilia, commonly called « Alexander's Feast.» There is some difference of evidence concerning the time occupied in this splendid task. He had been solicited to undertake it by the stewards of the Musical Meeting, which had for several years met to celebrate the feast of St Cecilia, their patroness, and whom he had formerly gratified by a similar performance. In September 1697, Dryden writes to his son :—« In the mean time, I am writing a song for St Cecilia's feast; who, you know, is the patroness of music. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the stewards, who came in a body to my house to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr Bridgeman, whose parents are your mother's friends.» This account seems to imply, that the Ode was a work of some time; which is countenanced by Dr Birch's expression, that Dryden himself « observes, in an original letter of his, that he was employed for almost a fortnight in composing and correcting it.» [1] On the other hand, the following anecdote is told upon very respectable authority. « Mr St John, afterwards Lord Bolingbroke, happening to pay a morning visit to Dryden, whom he always respected, found him in an unusual agitation of spirits, even to

[1] Dr Birch refers to the authority of Richard Graham, junior; but no such letter has been recovered.

a trembling. On inquiring the cause, 'I have been up all night,' replied the old bard: 'my musical friends made me promise to write them an Ode for their feast of St Cecilia: I have been so struck with the subject which occurred to me, that I could not leave it till I had *completed* it; here it is, *finished* at one sitting.' And immediately he showed him *this* Ode, which places the British lyric poetry above that of any other nation.» These accounts are not, however, so contradictory as they may at first sight appear. It is possible that Dryden may have completed, at one sitting, the whole Ode, and yet have employed a fortnight, or much more, in correction. There is strong internal evidence to show, that the poem was, speaking with reference to its general structure, wrought off at once. A halt or pause, even of a day, would perhaps have injured that continuous flow of poetical language and description, which argues the whole scene to have arisen at once upon the author's imagination. It seems possible, more especially in lyrical poetry, to discover where the author has paused for any length of time; for the union of the parts is rarely so perfect as not to show a different strain of thought and feeling. There may be something fanciful, however, in this reasoning, which I therefore abandon to the reader's mercy; only begging him to observe, that we have no mode of

estimating the exertions of a quality so capricious as a poetic imagination; so that it is very possible, that the Ode to St Cecilia may have been the work of twenty-four hours, whilst corrections and emendations, perhaps of no very great consequence, occupied the author as many days. Derrick, in his « Life of Dryden,» tells us, upon the authority of Walter Moyle, that the society paid Dryden 40*l.* for this sublime Ode, which, from the passage in his letter above quoted, seems to have been more than the bard expected at commencing his labour. The music for this celebrated poem was originally composed by Jeremiah Clarke,[1] one of the stewards of the festival, whose productions were more remarkable for deep pathos, and delicacy, than for fire and energy. It is probable that, with such a turn of mind and taste, he may have failed in setting the sublime, lofty, and daring flights of the Ode to St Cecilia. Indeed his composition was not judged worthy of publication. The Ode, after some impertinent alterations, made by Hughes, at the request of

[1] This discovery was made by the researches of Mr Malone. Dr Burney describes Clarke as excelling in the tender and plaintive, to which he was prompted by a temperament of natural melancholy. In the agonies which arose from an unfortunate attachment, he committed suicide, in July 1707. See a full account of the catastrophe, in Malone's « Life of Dryden,» p. 299.

Sir Richard Steele, was set to music by Clayton, who, with Steele, managed a public concert in 1711; but neither was this a successful essay to connect the poem with the art it celebrated. At length, in 1736, « Alexander's Feast» was set by Handel, and performed in the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden, with the full success which the combined talents of the poet and the musician seemed to ensure.[1] Indeed, although the music was at first less successful, the poetry received, even in the author's time, all the applause which its unrivalled excellence demanded. « I am glad to hear from all hands,» says Dryden, in a letter to Tonson, « that my Ode is esteemed the best of all my poetry, by all the town. I thought so myself when I writ it; but, being old, I mistrusted my own judgment.» Mr Ma-

[1] It was first performed on February 19, 1735-6, at opera prices. « The public expectations and the effects of the representation (says Dr Burney,) seem to have been correspondent, for the next day we are told in the public papers [London Daily Post, and General Advertiser, Feb. 20], that 'there never was, upon the like occasion, so numerous and splendid an audience at any theatre in London, there being at least thirteen hundred persons present; and it is judged, that the receipts of the house could not amount to less than 450l. It met with general applause, though attended with the inconvenience of having the performers placed at too great a distance from the audience, which we hear will be rectified the next time of performance.»—*Hist. of Music*, iv. 391.

lone has preserved a tradition, that the father of Lord Chief Justice Marlay, then a Templer, and frequenter of Will's coffee-house, took an opportunity to pay his court to Dryden, on the publication of « Alexander's Feast; » and, happening to sit next him, congratulated him on having produced the finest and noblest Ode that had ever been written in any language. « You are right, young gentleman (replied Dryden), a nobler Ode never *was* produced, nor ever *will*. » This singularly strong expression cannot be placed to the score of vanity. It was an inward consciousness of merit, which burst forth, probably almost involuntarily, and I fear must be admitted as prophetic.

The preparation of a new edition of the Virgil, which appeared in 1698, occupied nine days only, after which Dryden began seriously to consider to what he should next address his pen. The state of his circumstances rendered constant literary labour indispensible to the support of his family, although the exertion, and particularly the confinement, occasioned by his studies, considerably impaired his health. His son Charles had met with an accident at Rome, which was attended with a train of consequences perilous to his health; and Dryden, anxious to recal him to Britain, was obliged to make extraordinary exertions to provide against this additional expense. « If it please God, »

he writes to Tonson, « that I must die of over-study, I cannot spend my life better than in preserving his.» It is affecting to read such a passage in the life of such a man; yet the necessities of the poet, like the afflictions of the virtuous, smooth the road to immortality. While Milton and Dryden were favoured by the rulers of the day, they were involved in the religious and political controversies which raged around them; it is to hours of seclusion, neglect, and even penury, that we owe the Paradise Lost, the Virgil, and the Fables.

Among other projects, Dryden seems to have had thoughts of altering and revising a tragedy called the « Conquest of China by the Tartars,» written by his ancient friend and brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard. The unkindness which had arisen between them, upon the subject of blank verse and rhyme, seems to have been long since past away; and we observe, with pleasure, that Dryden, in the course of the pecuniary transactions about Virgil, reckons upon the assistance of Sir Robert Howard, and consults his taste also in the revisal of the version. But Dryden never altered the « Conquest of China,» being first interrupted by the necessity of revising Virgil, and afterwards, perhaps, by a sort of quarrel which took place between him and the players, of whom he speaks

most resentfully in his « Epistle to Granville,» upon his tragedy of « Heroic Love,» acted in the beginning of 1698. [1]

The success of Virgil encouraged Dryden about this time to turn his eyes upon Homer; and the general voice of the literary world called upon him to do the venerable Grecian the same service which the Roman had received from him. It was even believed that he had fixed upon the mode of translation, and that he was, as he elsewhere expresses it, to « fight unarmed, without his rhyme.» [2] A dubious anecdote bears that he even regretted he had

[1] « Thine be the laurel, then; thy blooming age
Can best, if any can, support the stage;
Which so declines, that shortly we may see
Players and plays reduced to second infancy.
Sharp to the world, but thoughtless of renown,
They plot not on the stage, but on the town;
And in despair their empty pit to fill,
Set up some foreign monster in a bill:
Thus they jog on, still tricking, never thriving,
And murth'ring plays, which they miscall—reviving.
Our sense is nonsense, through their pipes convey'd;
Scarce can a poet know the play he made,
'Tis so disguised in death; nor thinks 'tis he
That suffers in the mangled tragedy;
Thus Itys first was kill'd, and after dress'd
For his own sire, the chief invited guest.»

This gave great offence to the players; one of whom (Powell) made a petulant retort.

[2] Milbourne, in a note on that passage in the dedication to the Æneid—« *He who can write well in rhyme may*

not rendered Virgil into blank verse, and shows at the same time, if genuine, how far he must now have disapproved of his own attempt to turn into rhyme the Paradise Lost. The story is told by the elder Richardson, in his remarks on the tardy progress of Milton's great work in the public opinion. [1] When Dryden did translate the First Book of Homer, which he published with the Fables, he rendered it into rhyme; nor have we sufficient ground to believe that he ever seriously intended, in so large a work, to renounce the advantages which he possessed, by his unequalled command of versification. That in other respects the task was consonant to his temper, as well as talents, he has himself informed us. «My thoughts,» he says, in a letter to Halifax, in 1699, «are at present fixed on Homer; and by my trans-

write better in blank verse,» says,—«We shall know that, when we see how much better Dryden's Homer will be than his Virgil.»

[1] «Much the same character he gave of it (*i. e.* Paradise Lost,) to a north-country gentleman, to whom I mentioned the book, he being a great reader, but not in a right train, coming to town seldom, and keeping little company. Dryden amazed him with speaking so loftily of it. 'Why, Mr Dryden, says he (Sir W. L. told me the thing himself), 'tis not in rhyme.' 'No [replied Dryden]; '*nor would I have done my* Virgil *in rhyme, if I was to begin it again.*»— This conversation is supposed by Mr Malone to have been held with Sir Wilfred Lawson, of Isell in Cumberland.

lation of the first Iliad, I find him a poet more according to my genius than Virgil, and consequently hope I may do him more justice, in his fiery way of writing; which, as it is liable to more faults, so it is capable of more beauties, than the exactness and sobriety of Virgil. Since it is for my country's honour, as well as for my own, that I am willing to undertake this task, I despair not of being encouraged in it by your favour.» But this task Dryden was not destined to accomplish, although he had it so much at heart as to speak of resuming it only three months before his death.

In the mean while, our author had engaged himself in the composition of those imitations of Boccacio and Chaucer, which have been since called the «Fables;» and in spring 1699, he was in such forwardness, as to put into Tonson's hands «seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less,» as the contract bears, being a partial delivery to account of ten thousand verses, which by that deed he agreed to furnish, for the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, to be made up three hundred pounds upon publication of the second edition. This second payment Dryden lived not to receive. With the contents of this miscellaneous volume we are to suppose him engaged, from the revisal of the Virgil, in 1697. to the publication of the Fables, in

March 1699-1700. This was the last period of his labours, and of his life; and, like all the others, it did not pass undisturbed by acrimonious criticism, and bitter controversy. The dispute with Milbourne, we noticed, before dismissing the subject of Virgil; but there were two other persons who, in their zeal for morality and religion, chose to disturb the last years of the life of Dryden.

The indelicacy of the stage being, in its earliest period, merely the coarse gross raillery of a barbarous age, was probably of no greater injury to the morals of the audience, than it is to those of the lower ranks of society, with whom similar language is every where admitted as wit and humour. During the reigns of James I. and Charles I. this licence was gradually disappearing. In the domination of the fanatics, which succeeded, matters were so much changed, that, far from permitting the use of indelicate or profane allusions, they wrapped up not only their most common temporal affairs, but even their very crimes and vices, in the language of their spiritual concerns. Luxury was *using the creature;* avarice was *seeking experiences;* insurrection was *putting the hand to the plough;* actual rebellion, *fighting the good fight;* and regicide, *doing the great work of the Lord.* This vocabulary became grievously unfashionable at the Reformation, and was at once

swept away by the torrent of irreligion, blasphemy, and indecency, which were at that period deemed necessary to secure conversation against the imputation of disloyalty and fanaticism. The court of Cromwell, if lampoons can be believed, was not much less vicious than that of Charles II., but it was less scandalous; and, as Dryden himself expresses it,

> The sin was of our native growth, 'tis true;
> The scandal of the sin was wholly new.
> Misses there were, but modestly conceal'd,
> Whitehall the naked goddess first reveal'd;
> Who standing, as at Cyprus, in her shrine,
> The strumpet was adored with rites divine.

This torrent of licentiousness had begun in some degree to abate, even upon the accession of James II. whose manners did not encourage the same general licence as those of Charles. But after the Revolution, when an affectation of profligacy was no longer deemed a necessary attribute of loyalty, and when it began to be thought possible that a man might have some respect for religion without being a republican, or even a fanatic, the licence of the stage was generally esteemed a nuisance. It then happened, as is not uncommon, that those, most bustling and active to correct public abuses, were men whose intentions may, without doing them injury, be estimated more highly than their talents.

Thus, Sir Richard Blackmore, a grave physician, residing and practising on the sober side of Temple-Bar, was the first who professed to reform the spreading pest of poetical licentiousness, and to correct such men as Dryden, Congreve, and Wycherly. This worthy person, compassionating the state to which poetry was reduced by his contemporaries, who used their wit « in opposition to religion, and to the destruction of virtue and good manners in the world,» resolved to rescue the Muses from this unworthy thraldom, « to restore them to their sweet and chaste mansions, and to engage them in an employment suited to their dignity.» With this laudable view he wrote « Prince Arthur, an Epic Poem,» published in 1695. The preface contained a furious, though just, diatribe, against the licence of modern comedy, with some personal reflections aimed at Dryden directly.[1]

[1] « Some of these poets, to excuse their guilt, allege for themselves, that the degeneracy of the age makes their lewd way of writing necessary: they pretend the auditors will not be pleased, unless they are thus entertained from the stage; and to please, they say, is the chief business of the poet. But this is by no means a just apology: it is not true, as was said before, that the poet's chief business is to please. His chief business is to instruct, to make mankind wiser and better; and in order to this, his care should be to please and entertain the audience with all the wit and art he is master of. Aristotle and Horace, and all their critics and commen-

This the poet felt more unkindly, as Sir Richard had, without acknowledgment, availed himself of the hints he had thrown out in the « Essay upon Satire, » for the management of an epic poem on the subject of king Arthur. He bore, however, the attack, without resenting it, until he was again assailed by Sir Richard in his « Satire upon Wit, » written expressly to correct the dissolute and immoral per-

tators, all men of wit and sense, agree that this is the end of poetry. But they say, it is their profession to write for the stage, and that poets must starve if they will not in this way humour the audience: the theatre will be as unfrequented as the churches, and the poet and the parson equally neglected. Let the poet then abandon his profession, and take up some honest lawful calling, where, joining industry to his great wit, he may soon get above the complaints of poverty, so common among these ingenious men, and lie under no necessity of prostituting his wit to any such vile purposes as are here censured. This will be a course of life more profitable and honourable to himself, and more useful to others. And there are among these writers *some who think they might have risen to the highest dignities in other professions, had they employed their wit in those ways.* It is a mighty dishonour and reproach to any man that is capable of being useful to the world in any *liberal and virtuous* profession, *to lavish out* his *life and wit in propagating vice and corruption of manners,* and in battering from the stage the strongest entrenchments and best works of religion and virtue. Whoever makes this his choice, when the other was in his power, may he go off the stage unpitied, *complaining of neglect and poverty, the just punishments of his irreligion and folly!*»

formances of the writers of his time. With a ponderous attempt at humour, the good knight proposes, that a *bank for wit* should be established, and that all which had hitherto passed as current, should be called in, purified in the mint, recoined, and issued forth anew, freed from alloy.

This satire was published in 1700, as the title-page bears; but Mr Luttrel marks his copy 23d November, 1699.[1] It contains more than one attack upon our author. Thus, we are told (wit being previously described as a malady),

> Vanine, that look'd on all the danger past,
> Because he 'scaped so long, is seized at last;
> By p—, by hunger, and by Dryden bit,
> He grins and snarls, and, in his dogged fit,
> Froths at the mouth, a certain sign of wit.

Elsewhere the poet complains that the universities,

> —— debauch'd by Dryden and his crew,
> Turn bawds to vice, and wicked aims pursue.

Again, p. 14,

> Dryden condemn, who taught men how to make,
> Of dunces wits, an angel of a rake.

[1] Mr Malone conceives, that the Fables were published before the « Satire upon Wit;» but he had not this evidence of the contrary before him. It is therefore clear, that Dryden endured a second attack from Blackmore, before making any reply.

But the main offence lies in the following passage:

Set forth your edict; let it be enjoin'd,
That all defective species be recoin'd;
St E—m—t and R—r both are fit
To oversee the coining of our wit.
Let these be made the masters of essay,
They 'll every piece of metal touch and weigh,
And tell which is too light, which has too much allay.
'T is true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
Is purged away, there will be mighty loss.
E'en Congreve, Southerne, manly Wycherly,
When thus refined, will grievous sufferers be.
Into the melting pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
And wicked mixture, shall be purged away?
When once his boasted heaps are melted down,
A chest-full scarce will yield one sterling crown.
Those who will D—n's melt, and think to find
A goodly mass of bullion left behind,
Do, as the Hibernian wit, who, as 't is told,
Burnt his gilt feather, to collect the gold.
— — — — —
But what remains will be so pure, 't will bear
The examination of the most severe;
'T will S—r's scales and Talbot's test abide,
And with their mark please all the world beside.

These repeated attacks at length called down the vengeance of Dryden, who thus retorted upon him in the preface to the Fables.

« As for the City Bard, or Knight Physician I hear his quarrel to me is, that I was the author of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' which, he

thinks, is a little hard on his fanatic patrons in London.

« But I will deal the more civilly with his two poems, because nothing ill is to be spoken of the dead; and, therefore, peace be to the manes of his 'Arthurs.' I will only say, that it was not for this noble knight that I drew the plan of an epic poem on King Arthur, in my preface to the translation of Juvenal. The guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage, and therefore he rejected them, as Dares did the whirlbats of Eryx, when they were thrown before him by Entellus : yet from that preface he plainly took his hint; for he began immediately upon the story, though he had the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but, instead of it, to traduce me in a libel.»

Blackmore, who had perhaps thought the praise contained in his two last couplets ought to have allayed Dryden's resentment, finding that they failed in producing this effect, very unhandsomely omitted them in his next edition, and received, as will presently be noticed, another flagellation, in the last verses Dryden ever wrote.

But a more formidable champion than Blackmore had arisen, to scourge the profligacy of the theatre. This was no other than the celebrated Jeremy Collier, a nonjuring clergyman, who published, in 1698, « A Short

View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage.» His qualities as a reformer are described by Dr Johnson in language never to be amended. « He was formed for a controvertist; with sufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect; with unconquerable pertinacy; with wit in the highest degree keen and sarcastic; and with all those powers exalted and invigorated by the just confidence in his cause.

« Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and assailed at once most of the living writers, from Dryden to Durfey. His onset was violent: those passages, which while they stood single had passed with little notice, when they were accumulated and exposed together, excited horror; the wise and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had so long suffered irreligion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the public charge.»

Notwithstanding the justice of this description, there is a strange mixture of sense and nonsense in Collier's celebrated treatise. Not contented with resting his objections to dramatic immorality upon the substantial grounds of virtue and religion, Jeremy labours to confute the poets of the 17th century, by drawing them into comparison with Plautus and Aristophanes, which is certainly judging of one

crooked line by another. Neither does he omit, like his predecessor Prynne, to marshal against the British stage those fulminations directed by the fathers of the church against the Pagan theatres; although Collier could not but know, that it was the performance of the heathen ritual, and not merely the scenic action of the drama, which rendered it sinful for the early Christians to attend the theatre. The book was, however, of great service to dramatic poetry, which, from that time, was less degraded by licence and indelicacy.

Dryden, it may be believed, had, as his comedies well deserved, a liberal share of the general censure; but, however he might have felt the smart of Collier's severity, he had the magnanimity to acknowledge its justice. In the preface to the Fables, he makes the *amende honorable*. « I shall say the less of Mr Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly, and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine, which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance. It becomes me not to draw my pen in the defence of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one.» To this manly and liberal admission, he has indeed tacked a

complaint, that Collier had sometimes, by a strained interpretation, made the evil sense of which he complained; that he had too much « horse-play in his raillery,» and that, « if the zeal for God's house had not eaten him up, it had at least devoured some part of his good manners and civility.» Collier seems to have been somewhat pacified by this qualified acknowledgment, and, during the rest of the controversy, turned his arms chiefly against Congreve, who resisted, and spared, comparatively at least, the sullen submission of Dryden.

While these controversies were raging, Dryden's time was occupied with the translations or imitations of Chaucer and Boccacio. Among these, the « Character of the Good Parson» is introduced, probably to confute Milbourne, Blackmore, and Collier, who had severally charged our author with the wilful and premeditated contumely thrown upon the clergy in many passages of his satirical writings. This too seems to have inflamed the hatred of Swift, who, with all his levities, was strictly attached to his order, and keenly jealous of its honours.[1] Dryden himself seems

[1] In his apology for « The Tale of a Tub,» he points out to the resentment of the clergy, « those heavy illiterate scribblers, prostitute in their reputations, vicious in their lives, and ruined in their fortunes, who, to the shame of good sense, as well as piety, are greedily read, merely upon

to have been conscious of his propensity to assail churchmen. « I remember,» he writes to his sons, « the counsel you gave me in your letter; but dissembling, although lawful in some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature, and keep in my just resentments against that *degenerate order*.»[1] Milbourne,

the strength of bold, false, impious assertions, mixed with unmannerly reflections on the priesthood.» And, after no great interval, he mentions the passage quoted, p. 375, «in which Dryden, L'Estrange, and some others I shall not name, are levelled at; who, having spent their lives in faction, and apostacies, and all manner of vice, pretended to be sufferers for loyalty and religion. So Dryden tells us, in one of his prefaces, of his merits and sufferings, and thanks God that he possesses his soul in patience. In other places he talks at the same rate.»

[1] Thus, in a lampoon already quoted:

> Quitting my duller hopes, the poor renown
> Of Eaton College, or a Dublin gown.

Tom Brown makes the charge more directly. «But, prithee, why so severe always on the priesthood, Mr Bayes? What have they merited to pull down your indignation? I thought the ridiculing men of that character upon the stage was, by this time, a topic as much worn out with you, as love and honour in the play, or good fulsome flattery in the dedication. But you, I find, still continue your old humour, to date from the year of Hegira, the loss of Eaton, or since orders were refused you. Whatever hangs out either black or green colours is presently your prize: and you would, by your good will, be as mortifying a vexation to the whole tribe, as an unbegetting year, a concatenation of briefs, or a voracious visitor; so

and other enemies of our author, imputed this resentment against the clergy to his being refused orders when he wished to take them, in the reign of Charles, with a view to the provostship of Eaton, or some Irish preferment.[1] But Dryden assures us, that he never had any thoughts of entering the church. Indeed, his original offences of this kind may be safely ascribed to the fashionable practice after the Restoration, of laughing at all that was accounted serious before that period. And when Dryden became a convert to the Catholic faith, he was, we have seen, involved in an immediate and furious controversy with the clergy of the Church of England. Thus, an unbeseeming strain of raillery, adopted in wantonness, became aggravated, by controversy, into real dislike and animosity. But Dryden, in the «Character of a Good Parson,» seems determined to show, that he could estimate the virtue of the clerical order. He undertook the task at the instigation of Mr Pepys, the founder of the library in Magdalen College, which bears his name, and has accomplished it with equal spirit and elegance; not forgetting, however, to make his pattern

[1] that I am of opinion, you had much better have written in your title-page,

« ——— Manet alta mente repostum
Judicium *Cleri*, spretæque injuria *Musæ*. »

The same reproach is urged by Settle.

of clerical merit of his own jacobitical principles.

Another very pleasing performance, which entered the miscellany called « The Fables, is the epistle of John Driden of Chesterton, the poet's cousin. The letters to Mrs Stewart show the friendly intimacy in which the relations had lived, since the opposition of the Whigs to King William's government in some degree united that party in conduct, though not in motive, with the favourers of King James. Yet our author's strain of politics, as at first expressed in the epistle, was too severe for his cousin's digestion. Some reflections upon the Dutch allies, and their behaviour in the war, were omitted, as tending to reflect upon King William, and the whole piece, to avoid the least chance of giving offence, was subjected to the revision of Montague, with a deprecation of his displeasure, an entreaty of his patronage, and the humiliating offer, that, although repeated correction had already purged the spirit out of the poem, nothing should stand in it relating to public affairs, without Mr Montague's permission. What answer « full-blown Bufo» returned to Dryden's petition, does not appear; but the author's opposition principles were so deeply woven in with the piece, that they could not be obliterated without tearing it to pieces. His model of an English member

of parliament votes in opposition, as his Good Parson is a nonjuror; and the Fox in the fable of Old Chaucer is translated into a puritan.[1] The epistle was highly acceptable to Mr Driden of Chesterton, who acknowledged the immortality conferred on him, by « a noble present, » which family tradition states to have amounted to 500l.[2] Neither did Dryden neglect so fair an opportunity to avenge himself

[1] There was, to be sure, in the provoking scruples of that rigid sect, something peculiarly tempting to a satirist. How is it possible to forgive Baxter, for the affectation with which he records the enormities of his childhood?

« Though my conscience, » says he, « would trouble me when I sinned, yet divers sins I was addicted to, and oft committed against my conscience, which, for the warning of others, I will here confess to my shame. I was much addicted to the *excessive gluttonous eating of apples and pears*, which I think laid the foundation of the imbecility and flatulency of my stomach, which caused the bodily calamities of my life. To this end, and to concur with naughty boys that gloried in evil, I have oft gone into other men's orchards, and stolen the fruit, when I had enough at home. » There are six other retractations of similar enormities, when he concludes:—'These were my sins in my childhood, as to which, conscience troubled me for a great while before they were overcome.' Baxter was a pious and worthy man; but can any one read this confession without thinking of Tartuffe, who subjected himself to penance for killing a flea, with too much anger?

[2] Mr Malone thinks tradition has confounded a present made to the poet himself, probably of 100*l.*, with a legacy bequeathed to his son Charles, which last did amount to 500*l.*, but which Charles lived not to receive.

on his personal, as well as his political adversaries. Milbourne and Blackmore receive in the epistle severe chastisement for their assaults upon his poetry and private character:

What help from art's endeavours can we have?
Gubbons but guesses, nor is sure to save;
But Maurus sweeps whole parishes, and peoples every grave;
And no more mercy to mankind will use,
Than when he robb'd and murder'd Maro's muse.
Would'st thou be soon despatch'd, and perish whole,
Trust Maurus with thy life, and Milbourne with thy soul.

Referring to another place, what occurs upon the style and execution of the Fables, I have only to add, that they were published early in spring 1700, in a large folio, and with the «Ode to Saint Cecilia.» The epistle to Driden of Chesterton, and a translation of the first Iliad, must have more than satisfied the mercantile calculation of Tonson, since they contained seventeen hundred verses above the quantity which Dryden had contracted to deliver. In the preface, the author vindicates himself with great spirit against his literary adversaries; makes his usual strong and forcible remarks on the genius of the authors whom he had imitated; and, in this his last critical work, shows all the acumen which had so long distinguished his powers. The Fables were dedicated to the last Duke of Ormond, the grandson of the Barzillai of «Absalom and Achitophel,» and the son of

the heroic Earl of Ossory; friends both, and patrons of Dryden's earlier essays. There is something affecting in a connexion so honourably maintained; and the sentiment, as touched by Dryden, is simply pathetic. «I am not vain enough to boast, that I have deserved the value of so illustrious a line; but my fortune is the greater, that for three descents they have been pleased to distinguish my poems from those of other men; and have accordingly made me their peculiar care. May it be permitted me to say, that as your grandfather and father were cherished and adorned with honours by two successive monarchs, so I have been esteemed and patronized by the grandfather, the father, and the son, descended from one of the most ancient, most conspicuous, and most deserving families in Europe.»

There were also prefixed to the «Fables» those introductory verses addressed to the beautiful Duchess of Ormond,[1] which have all the easy, felicitous, and sprightly gallantry, demanded on such occasions. The incense, it is said, was acknowledged by a present of

[1] She is distinguished for beauty and virtue, by the author of «The Court at Kensington.» 1699-1700.

So Ormond's graceful mien attracts all eyes,
And nature needs not ask from art supplies;
An air of grandeur shines through every part,
And in her beauteous form is placed the noblest heart:
In vain mankind adore, unless she were
By Heaven made less virtuous, or less fair.

500l., a donation worthy of the splendid house of Ormond. The sale of the «Fables» was surprisingly slow: even the death of the author, which has often sped away a lingering impression, does not seem to have increased the demand; and the second edition was not printed till 1713, when Dryden and all his immediate descendants being no more, the sum stipulated upon that event was paid by Tonson to Lady Sylvius, daughter of one of Lady Elizabeth Dryden's brothers, for the benefit of his widow, then in a state of lunacy.

The end of Dryden's labours was now fast approaching, and as his career began upon the stage, it was in some degree doomed to terminate there. It is true, he never recalled his resolution to write no more plays; but Vanburgh having about this time revised and altered for the Drury-lane theatre Fletcher's lively comedy of «The Pilgrim,» it was agreed that Dryden, or, as one account says, his son Charles,[1] should have the profits of a third night, on condition of adding to the piece a Secular Masque, adapted to the supposed ter-

[1] Gildon, in his «Comparison between the Stages.»— «Nay then,» says the whole party at Drury-lane, «we 'll even put 'The Pilgrim' upon him.» «Ay, 'faith, so we will,» says Dryden: «and if you 'll let my son have the profits of the third night, I 'll give you a Secular Masque.» «Done,» says the House; «and so the bargain was struck.»

mination of the seventeenth century;[1] a Dialogue in the Madhouse between two Distracted Lovers, and a Prologue and Epilogue. The Secular Masque contains a beautiful and spirited delineation of the reigns of James I. Charles I. and Charles II., in which the influence of Diana, Mars, and Venus, are supposed to have respectively predominated. Our author did not venture to assign a patron to the last years of the century, though the expulsion of Saturn might have given a hint for it. The music of the Masque is said to have been good; at least it is admired by the eccentric author of John Buncle.[2] The Prologue and Epilogue to « The Pilgrim » were written within twenty days of Dryden's death;[3] and their spirit equals that of any of his satirical compositions. They afford us the less pleasing conviction, that even the last fortnight of Dryden's life was occupied in repelling or retorting the venomed attacks of his literary foes. In the Prologue he gives Blackmore a drubbing which would have annihi-

[1] *i. e.* Upon the 25th March, 1700; it being supposed, (as by many in our own time) that the century was concluded so soon as the hundredth year commenced;—as if a play was ended at the *beginning of the fifth act.*

[2] It was again set by Dr Boyce, and in 1749 performed in the Drury-lane theatre, with great success.

[3] By a letter to Mrs Stuart, dated the 11th April, 1700, it appears they were then only in his contemplation, and the poet died upon the first of the succeeding month.

lated any author of ordinary modesty; but the knight[1] was as remarkable for his powers of endurance as some modern pugilists are said

[1] Quack Maurus, though he never took degrees
In either of our universities,
Yet to be shown by some kind wit he looks,
Because he play'd the fool, and writ three books.
But if he would be worth a poet's pen,
He must be more a fool, and write again:
For all the former fustian stuff he wrote
Was dead-born doggrel, or is quite forgot;
His man of Uz, stript of his Hebrew robe,
Is just the proverb, and «As poor as Job.»
One would have thought he could no longer jog;
But Arthur was a level, Job 's a bog.
There though he crept, yet still he kept in sight;
But *here* he flounders in, and sinks downright.
Had he prepared us, and been dull by rule,
Tobit had first been turned to ridicule;
But our bold Briton, without fear or awe,
O'erleaps at once the whole Apocrypha;
Invades the Psalms with rhymes, and leaves no room
For any Vandal Hopkins yet to come.
But when, if, after all, this godly gear
Is not so senseless as it would appear,
Our mountebank has laid a deeper train;
His cant, like Merry Andrew's noble vein,
Cat-calls the sects to draw them in again.
At leisure hours in epic song he deals,
Writes to the rumbling of his coach's wheels;
Prescribes in haste, and seldom kills by rule,
But rides triumphant between stool and stool.
Well, let him go,—'t is yet too early day
To get himself a place in farce or play;
We know not by what name we should arraign him,
For no one category can contain him.

to be for the quality technically called *bottom*. After having been « brayed in a mortar,» as Solomon expresses it, by every wit of his time, Sir Richard not only survived to commit new offences against ink and paper, but had his faction, his admirers, and his panegyrists, among that numerous and sober class of readers, who think that genius consists in good intention.[1] In the Epilogue, Dryden attacks

> A pedant,—canting preacher,—and a quack,
> Are load enough to break an ass's back.
> At last, grown wanton, he presumed to write,
> Traduced two kings, their kindness to requite;
> One made the doctor, and one dubb'd the knight.

[1] One of these well-meaning persons insulted the ashes of Dryden while they were still warm, in « An Epistle to Sir Richard Blackmore, occasioned by the New Session of the Poets.» Marked by Mr Luttrell, 1st November, 1700.

> His mighty Dryden to the shades is gone,
> And Congreve leaves successor of his throne:
> Though long before his final exit hence,
> He was himself an abdicated Prince;
> Disrobed of all regalities of state,
> Drawn by a Hind and Panther from his seat.
> Heir to his plays, his fables, and his tales,
> Congreve is the poetic prince of Wales;
> Nor at St Germains, but at Will's, his court,
> Whither the subjects of his dad resort;
> Where plots are hatch'd, and councils yet unknown,
> How young Ascanius may ascend the throne,
> That in despite of all the muses' laws,
> He may revenge his injured father's cause.
> Go, nauseous rhymers, into darkness go,
> And view your monarch in the shades below,
> Who takes not now from Helicon his drink,
> But sips from Styx a liquor black as ink;

Collier, but with more courteous weapons: it is rather a palliation than a defence of dramatic immorality, and contains nothing personally offensive to Collier.—Thus so dearly was Dryden's pre-eminent reputation purchased, that even his last hours were embittered with controversy; and nature, overwatched and worn out, was, like a besieged garrison, forced to obey the call to arms, and defend reputation even with the very last exertion of the vital spirit.

The approach of death was not, however,

> Like Sisyphus, a restless stone he turns,
> And in a pile of his own labours burns;
> Whose curling flames most ghastly fiends do raise,
> Supplied with fuel from his impious plays;
> And when he fain would puff away the flame,
> One stops his mouth with bawdy Limberham;
> There, to augment the terrors of the place,
> His Hind and Panther stare him in the face;
> They grin like devils at the cursed toad,
> Who made him draw on earth so vile a load.
> Could some infernal painter draw the sight,
> And once transmit it to the realms of light,
> It might our poets from their sins affright:
> Or could they hear, how there the sons of verse
> In dismal yells their tortures do express;
> How scorch'd with ballads on the Stygian shore,
> They horrors in a dismal chorus roar;
> Or see how the laureate does his grandeur bear,
> Crown'd with a wreath of flaming sulphur there:
> This, sir 's, your fate, cursed critics you oppose,
> The most tyrannical and cruel foes;
> Dryden, their huntsman dead, no more he wounds,
> But now you must engage his pack of hounds.

so gradual as might have been expected from the poet's chronic diseases. He had long suffered both by the gout and gravel, and more lately the erysipelas seized one of his legs. To a shattered frame and a corpulent habit, the most trifling accident is often fatal. A slight inflammation in one of his toes became, from neglect, a gangrene. Mr Hobbes, an eminent surgeon, to prevent mortification, proposed to amputate the limb; but Dryden, who had no reason to be in love with life, refused the chance of prolonging it by a doubtful and painful operation.[1] After a short interval, the catastrophe expected by Mr Hobbes took place, and Dryden, not long surviving the consequences, left life on Wednesday morning, 1st May, 1700, at three o'clock. He seems to have been sensible till nearly his last moments, and died in the Roman Catholic faith, with submission and entire resignation to the divine will; « taking of his friends,» says Mrs Creed, one of the sorrowful number, « so tender and obliging a farewell, as none but he himself could have expressed.»

The death of a man like Dryden, especially

[1] According to Ward, his expressions were, « that he was an old man, and had not long to live by course of nature, and therefore did not care to part with one limb, at such an age, to preserve an uncomfortable life on the rest.»—*London Spy*, Part XVIII.

in narrow and neglected circumstances, is usually an alarum-bell to the public. Unavailing and mutual reproaches, for unthankful and pitiless negligence, waste themselves in newspaper paragraphs, elegies, and funeral processions; the debt to genius is then deemed discharged, and a new account of neglect and commemoration is opened between the public and the next who rises to supply his room. It was thus with Dryden. His family were preparing to bury him with the decency becoming their limited circumstances, when Charles Montague, Lord Jefferies, and other men of quality, made a subscription for a public funeral. The body of the poet was then removed to the Physicians' Hall, where it was embalmed, and lay in state till the 13th day of May, twelve days after the decease. On that day, the celebrated Dr Garth pronounced a Latin oration over the remains of his departed friend; which were then, with considerable state, preceded by a band of music, and attended by a numerous procession of carriages, transported to Westminster Abbey, and deposited between the graves of Chaucer and Cowley.

The malice of Dryden's contemporaries, which he had experienced through life, attempted to turn into burlesque these funeral honours. Farquhar, the comic dramatist, wrote a letter containing a ludicrous account of the

funeral;[1] in which, as Mr Malone most justly remarks, he only sought to amuse his fair correspondent by an assemblage of ludicrous and antithetical expressions and ideas, which, when accurately examined, express little more than the bustle and confusion which attends every funeral procession of uncommon splendour. Upon this ground-work, Mrs Thomas (the Corinna of Pope and Cromwell) raised, at the distance of thirty years, the marvellous structure of fable, which has been copied by all Dryden's biographers, till the industry of Mr Malone has sent it, with other figments of the same lady, to « the grave of all the Capulets.»[2] She appears to have been something

[1] « I come now from Mr Dryden's funeral, where we had an Ode in Horace sung, instead of David's Psalms; whence you may find, that we don't think a poet worth Christian burial. The pomp of the ceremony was a kind of rhapsody, and fitter, I think, for Hudibras, than him, because the cavalcade was mostly burlesque: but he was an extraordinary man, and buried after an extraordinary fashion; for I do believe there was never such another burial seen. The oration, indeed, was great and ingenious, worthy the subject, and like the author; whose prescriptions can restore the living, and his pen embalm the dead. And so much for Mr Dryden, whose burial was the same as his life,—variety, and not of a piece:—the quality and mob, farce and heroics; the sublime and ridicule mixed in a piece;—great Cleopatra in a hackney coach.»

[2] It was first published in « Wilson's Life of Congreve,» 1730. Mr Malone has successfully shown that it is false in almost all its parts: for, independently of the extreme

assisted by a burlesque account of the funeral, imputed by Mr Malone to Tom Brown, who certainly continued to insult Dryden's memory whenever an opportunity offered.[1] Indeed,

improbability of the whole story, it is clear, from Ward's account, written at the time, that Lord Jefferies, who it is pretended interrupted the funeral, did, in fact, largely contribute to it. This also appears from a paragragh, in a letter from Doctor, afterwards Bishop Tanner, dated May 6th, 1700, and thus given by Mr Malone:—« Mr Dryden died a papist, if at all a Christian. Mr Montague had given orders to bury him; but some lords (my Lord Dorset, Jefferies, etc.) thinking it would not be splendid enough, ordered him to be carried to Russell's: there he was embalmed, and now lies in state at the Physicians' College, and is to be buried with Chaucer, Cowley, etc. at Westminster Abbey, on Monday next.» *MSS. Ballard. in Bibl. Bodl.* vol. IV. p. 29.

[1] The following lines are given by Mr Malone as a specimen:

« Before the hearse the mourning hautboys go,
And screech a dismal sound of grief and woe:
More dismal notes from bogtrotters may fall,
More dismal plaints at Irish funeral;
But no such floods of tears e'er stopp'd our tide,
Since Charles, the martyr and the monarch, died.
The decency and order first describe,
Without regard to either sex or tribe.
The sable coaches led the dismal van,
But by their side, I think, few footmen ran;
Nor needed these; the rabble fill the streets,
And mob with mob in great disorder meets.
See next the coaches, how they are accouter'd,
Both in the inside, eke and on the outward:
One p—y spark, one sound as any roach,
One poet and two fiddlers in a coach:

Mrs Thomas herself quotes this last respectable authority. It must be a well-conducted and uncommon public ceremony, where the philosopher can find nothing to condemn, nor the satirist to ridicule; yet, to our imagination, what can be more striking, than the procession of talent and rank, which escorted the remains of DRYDEN to the tomb of CHAUCER!

The private character of the individual, his personal appearance, and rank in society, are the circumstances which generally interest the public most immediately upon his decease.

We are enabled, from the various paintings and engravings of Dryden, as well as from the less flattering delineations of the satirists of his time, to form a tolerable idea of his face and person. In youth, he appears to have been handsome,[1] and of a pleasing countenance; when his age was more advanced, he was corpulent and florid, which procured him the nick-name attached to him by Rochester.[2] In his latter days, distress and disappointment probably chilled the fire of his eye, and the advance of age destroyed the animation of his

> The playhouse drab, that beats the beggar's bush,
> — — — — — — — —
> By every body kiss'd, good troth,—but such is
> Now her good fate, to ride with mistress Duchess.
> Was e'er immortal poet thus buffoon'd!
> In a long line of coaches thus lampoon'd!»

[1] Page 78.

[2] « Poet Squab.» P. 183.

countenance.[1] Still, however, his portraits bespeak the look and features of genius; especially that in which he is drawn with his waving grey hairs.

In disposition and moral character, Dryden is represented as most amiable, by all who had access to know him; and his works, as well as letters, bear evidence to the justice of their panegyric. Congreve's character of the poet was drawn doubtless favourably, yet it contains points which demonstrate its fidelity.

« Whoever shall censure me, I dare be confident, you, my lord, will excuse me for any thing that I shall say with due regard to a gentleman, for whose person I had as just an affection as I have an admiration of his writ-

[1] From « Epigrams on the Paintings of the most eminent Masters,» by J. E. (John Elsum), Esq. 8vo. 1700, Mr Malone gives the following lines:

The Effigies of Mr Dryden, by Closterman,
Epig. clxiv.

« A sleepy eye he shows, and no sweet feature,
Yet was indeed a favourite of nature:
Endow'd and graced with an exalted mind,
With store of wit, and that of every kind.
Juvenal's tartness, Horace's sweet air,
With Virgil's force, in him concenter'd were.
But though the painter's art can never show it,
That his examplar was so great a poet,
Yet are the lines and tints so subtly wrought,
You may perceive he was a man of thought.
Closterman, 't is confess'd, has drawn him well,
But short of Absalom and Achitophel.»

ings. And indeed Mr Dryden had personal qualities to challenge both love and esteem from all who were truly acquainted with him.

« He was of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate; easily forgiving injuries, and capable of a prompt and sincere reconciliation with them who had offended him.

« Such a temperament is the only solid foundation of all moral virtues and social endowments. His friendship, where he professed it, went much beyond his professions; and I have been told of strong and generous instances of it by the persons themselves who received them, though his hereditary income was little more than a bare competency.

« As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of every thing that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge, than he was communicative of it. But then his communication of it was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation; but just such, and went so far, as, by the natural turns of the discourse in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extreme ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him; and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehension of others, in respect of his own oversight or mistakes. He was of very easy, I may say, of very pleasing access;

but something slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others. He had something in his nature, that abhorred intrusion into any society whatsoever. Indeed, it is to be regretted, that he was rather blameable in the other extreme; for, by that means, he was personally less known, and, consequently, his character might become liable both to misapprehensions and misrepresentations.

« To the best of my knowledge and observation, he was, of all the men that ever I knew, one of the most modest, and the most easily to be discountenanced in his approaches either to his superiors or his equals.»

This portrait is from the pen of friendship; yet, if we consider all the circumstances of Dryden's life, we cannot deem it much exaggerated. For about forty years, his character, personal and literary, was the object of assault by every subaltern scribbler, titled or untitled, laureated or pilloried. « My morals,» he himself has said, « have been sufficiently aspersed; that only sort of reputation, which ought to be dear to every honest man, and is to me.» In such an assault, no weapon would remain unhandled, no charge, true or false, unpreferred, providing it was but plausible. Such qualities, therefore, as we do not, in such circumstances, find excepted against, must surely be admitted to pass to the credit of Dryden. His change of political opinion, from the time he entered

life under the protection of a favourite of Cromwell, might have argued instability, if he had changed a second time, when the current of power and popular opinion set against the doctrines of the Reformation. As it is, we must hold Dryden to have acted from conviction, since personal interest, had that been the ruling motive of his political conduct, would have operated as strongly in 1688 as in 1660. The change of his religion we have elsewhere discussed; and endeavoured to show, that, although Dryden was unfortunate in adopting the more corrupted form of our religion, yet considered relatively, it was a fortunate and laudable conviction which led him from the mazes of scepticism to become a catholic of the communion of Rome.[1] It would be vain to maintain, that in his early career he was free from the follies and vices of a dissolute period; but the absence of every positive charge, and the silence of numerous accusers, may be admitted to prove, that he partook in them more from general example than inclination, and with a moderate, rather than voracious or undistinguishing appetite. It must be admitted, that he sacrificed to the Belial or Asmodeus of the age, in his writings; and that he formed his taste upon the licentious and gay society with which he mingled. But

[1] See vol. II. page 6.

we have the testimony of one who knew him well, that, however loose his comedies, the temper of the author was modest;[1] his indelicacy was like the forced impudence of a bashful man; and Rochester has accordingly upbraided him, that his licentiousness was neither natural nor seductive. Dryden had unfortunately conformed enough to the taste of his age, to attempt that « nice mode of wit,» as it is termed by the said noble author, whose name has become inseparably connected with it; but it sate awkwardly upon his natural modesty, and in general sounds impertinent, as well as disgusting. The clumsy phraseology of Burnet, in passing censure on the immorality of the stage, after the Restoration, terms « Dryden, the greatest master of dramatic poesy, a monster of immodesty and of impurity of all sorts.» The expression called forth the animated defence of Granville, Lord Lansdowne, our author's noble friend. « All who knew him,» said Lansdowne, « can testify this was not his character. He was so much a stranger

[1] A correspondent of the Gentleman's Magazine, in 1745, already quoted, says of him as a personal acquaintance: « Posterity is absolutely mistaken as to that great man: though forced to be a satirist, he was the mildest creature breathing, and the readiest to help the young and deserving. Though his comedies are horribly full of *double entendre*, yet 't was owing to a false complaisance. He was, in company, the modestest man that ever conversed.»

to immodesty, that modesty in too great a degree was his failing: he hurt his fortune by it, he complained of it, and never could overcome it. He was,» adds he, « esteemed, courted, and admired, by all the great men of the age in which he lived, who would certainly not have received into friendship a monster, abandoned to all sorts of vice and impurity. His writings will do immortal honour to his name and country, and his poems last as long, if I may have leave to say it, as the Bishop's sermons, supposing them to be equally excellent in their kind.» [1]

The Bishop's youngest son, Thomas Burnet, in replying to Lord Lansdowne, explained his father's last expressions as limited to Dryden's plays, and showed, by doing so, that there was no foundation for fixing this gross and dubious charge upon his private moral character.

Dryden's conduct as a father, husband, and master of a family, seems to have been affectionate, faithful, and, so far as his circumstances admitted, liberal and benevolent. The whole tenor of his correspondence bears witness to his paternal feelings; and even when he was obliged to have recourse to Tonson's immediate assistance to pay for the presents he sent them, his affection vented itself in that manner.

[1] Letter to the author of « Reflections Historical and Political.» 4to, 1732.

As a husband, if Lady Elizabeth's peculiarities of temper precluded the idea of a warm attachment, he is not upbraided with neglect or infidelity by any of his thousand assailants. As a landlord, Mr Malone has informed us, on the authority of Lady Dryden, that « his little estate at Blakesley is at this day occupied by one Harriots, grandson of the tenant who held it in Dryden's time; and he relates, that his grandfather was used to take great pleasure in talking of our poet. He was, he said, the easiest and the kindest landlord in the world, and never raised the rent during the whole time he possessed the estate. »

Some circumstances, however, may seem to degrade so amiable a private, so sublime a poetical character. The license of his comedy, as we have seen, had for it only the apology of universal example, and must be lamented, though not excused. Let us, however, remember, that if in the hey-day of the merry monarch's reign, Dryden ventured to maintain, that, the prime end of poetry being pleasure, the muses ought not to be fettered by the chains of strict decorum; yet in his more advanced and sober mood he evinced sincere repentance for his trespass, by patient and unresisting submission to the coarse and rigorous chastisement of Collier. If it is alleged, that, in the fury of his loyal satire, he was not always solicitous concerning its justice, let us make

allowance for the prejudice of party, and consider at what advantage, after the lapse of more than a century, and through the medium of impartial history, we now view characters, who were only known to their contemporaries as zealous partisans of an opposite and detested faction. The moderation of Dryden's reprisals, when provoked by the grossest calumny and personal insult, ought also to plead in his favour. Of the hundreds who thus assailed, not only his literary, but his moral reputation, he has distinguished Settle and Shadwell alone by an elaborate retort. Those who look into Mr Luttrel's collections will at once see the extent of Dryden's sufferance, and the limited degree of his retaliation.

The extreme flattery of Dryden's dedications has been objected to him, as a fault of an opposite description; and perhaps no writer has equalled him in the profusion and elegance of his adulation. «Of this kind of meanness,» says Johnson, «he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity. He considers the great as entitled to encomiastic homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift; more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment.» It may be noticed, in palliation of this heavy charge, that the form of address to superiors must be judged of by the manners of the times; and that the

adulation contained in dedications was then as much a matter of course, as the words of submissive style which still precede the subscription of an ordinary letter. It is probable, that Dryden considered his panegyrics as merely conforming with the fashion of the day, and rendering unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's,—attended with no more degradation than the payment of any other tribute to the forms of politeness and usage of the world.

Of Dryden's general habits of life we can form a distinct idea, from the evidence assembled by Mr Malone. His mornings were spent in study; he dined with his family, probably about two o'clock. After dinner he went usually to Will's Coffee-house, the famous rendezvous of the wits of the time, where he had his established chair by the chimney in winter, and near the balcony in summer, whence he pronounced, *ex cathedra*, his opinion upon new publications, and, in general, upon all matters of dubious criticism.[1] Latterly, all

[1] From the poem in the passage last quoted, it seems that the original sign of Will's Coffee-house had been a *cow*. It was changed, however, to a *rose*, in Dryden's time. This wits' coffee-house was situated at the end of Bow-street, on the north side of Russell-street, and frequented by all who made any pretence to literature, or criticism. Their company, it would seem, was attended with more honour than profit; for Dennis describes William Erwin, or Urwin, who kept the house, as taking refuge in Whitefriars, then a place of asylum, to escape

who had occasion to ridicule or attack him, represent him as presiding in this little senate. His opinions, however, were not maintained with dogmatism; and we have an instance, in a pleasing anecdote told by Dr Lockier,[1] that Dryden readily listened to criticism, provided it was just, from whatever unexpected and

the clutches of his creditors. « For since the law,» says the critic, « thought it just to put Will out of its protection, Will thought it but prudent to put himself out of its power.»

[1] The Dean of Peterborough—« I was,» says he, « about seventeen when I first came to town; an odd-looking boy, with short rough hair, and that sort of awkwardness which one always brings out of the country with one: however, in spite of my bashfulness and appearance, I used now and then to thrust myself into Will's, to have the pleasure of seeing the most celebrated wits of that time, who used to resort thither. The second time that ever I was there, Mr Dryden was speaking of his own things, as he frequently did, especially of such as had been lately published. 'If any thing of mine is good,' says he, ''t is my Mac-Flecknoe; and I value myself the more on it, because it is the first piece of ridicule written in heroics.' Lockier, overhearing this, plucked up his spirit so far as to say, in a voice just loud enough to be heard, that Mac-Flecknoe was a very fine poem, but that he had not imagined it to be the first that ever was wrote that way. On this Dryden turned short upon him, as surprised at his interposing; asked him how long he had been a dealer in poetry, and added, with a smile,—'But pray, sir, what is it, that you did imagine to have been writ so before?' Lockier named Boileau's Lutrin, and Tassoni's Secchia Rapita, which he had read, and knew Dryden had borrowed some strokes from each. ''T is true,' says Dryden;

undignified quarter it happened to come. In general, however, it may be supposed, that few ventured to dispute his opinion, or place themselves in the gap between him and the object of his censure. He was most falsely accused of carrying literary jealousy to such a length, as feloniously to encourage Creech to venture on a translation of Horace, that he might lose the character he had gained by a version of Lucretius. But this is positively contradicted, upon the authority of Southerne.[1]

We have so often stopped in our narrative of Dryden's life to notice the respectability of

—'I had forgot them.' A little after, Dryden went out, and in going spoke to Lockier again, and desired him to come to him the next day. Lockier was highly delighted with the invitation, and was well acquainted with him as long as he lived.»—MALONE, vol. I. p. 481.

[1] «I have often heard,» says Mr George Russell, «that Mr Dryden, dissatisfied and envious at the reputation Creech obtained by his translation of Lucretius, purposely advised him to undertake Horace, to which he knew him unequal, that he might by his ill performance lose the fame he had acquired. Mr Southerne, author of 'Oroonoko,' set me right as to the conduct of Mr Dryden in this affair; affirming, that being one evening at Mr Dryden's lodgings, in company with Mr Creech, and some other ingenious men, Mr Creech told the company of his design to translate Horace; from which Mr Dryden, with many arguments, dissuaded him, as an attempt which his genius was not adapted to, and which would risk his losing the good opinion the world had of him, by his successful translation of Lucretius. I thought it proper to acquaint you with this circumstance, since it rescues the fame of one of our

his general society, that little need here be said on the subject. A contemporary authority, the reference to which I have mislaid, says, that Dryden was shy and silent in society, till a moderate circulation of the bottle had removed his natural reserve, and that he frequently justified this degree of conviviality by saying, «there was no deceit in a brimmer.» But, although no enemy to conviviality, Dryden is pronounced by Pope to have been regular in his hours, in comparison with Addison, who, otherwise, lived the same coffee-house course of life. He has himself told us, that he was «saturnine and reserved, and not one of those who endeavour to entertain company by lively sallies of merriment and wit;» and an adversary has put into his mouth this couplet:

> Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
> To writing bred, I knew not what to say.
> *Dryden's Satire to his Muse.*

But the admission of the author, and the censure of the satirist, must be received with some limitation. Dryden was thirty years old before he was freed from the fetters of puritan-

greatest poets from the imputation of envy and malevolence.» Yet Jacob Tonson told Spence, «that Dryden would compliment Crowne when a play of his failed, but was cold to him if he met with success. He used sometimes to say, that Crowne had some genius; but then he always added, that his father and Crowne's mother were very well acquainted.»—MALONE, vol. I. p. 500.

ism; and if the habits of lively expression in society are not acquired before that age, they are seldom gained afterward. But this applies only to the deficiency of repartee, in the sharp encounter of wit which was fashionable at the court of Charles, and cannot be understood to exclude Dryden's possessing the more solid qualities of agreeable conversation, arising from a memory profoundly stocked with knowledge, and a fancy which supplied modes of illustration faster than the author could use them.[1] Some few sayings of Dryden have been, however, preserved; which, if not witty, are at least jocose. He is said to have been the original author of the repartee to the Duke of Buckingham, who, in bowling, offered to lay «his soul to a turnip,» or something still more vile. «Give me the odds,» said Dryden, «and I take the bet.» When his wife wished to be a

[1] His conversation is thus characterized by a contemporary writer:

«O Sir, there 's a medium in all things. Silence and chat are distant enough, to have a convenient discourse come between them; and thus far I agree with you, that the company of the author of 'Absalom and Achitophel' is more valuable, though not so talkative, than that of the modern men of *banter;* for what he says is like what he writes, much to the purpose, and full of mighty sense; and if the town were for any thing desirable, it were for the conversation of him, and one or two more of the same character.»—*The Humours and Conversation of the Town exposed, in two Dialogues*, 1693, p. 73.

book, that she might enjoy more of his company, « Be an almanack then, my dear,» said the poet, « that I may change you once a-year.» Another time, a friend expressing his astonishment that even D'Urfey could write such stuff as a play they had just witnessed, « Ah, sir,» replied Dryden, « You do not know my friend Tom so well as I do; I'll answer for him, he can write worse yet.» None of these anecdotes intimate great brilliancy of repartee; but that Dryden, possessed of such a fund of imagination, and acquired learning, should be dull in conversation, is impossible. He is known frequently to have regaled his friends, by communicating to them a part of his labours; but his poetry suffered by his recitation. He read his productions very ill;[1] owing, perhaps, to the modest reserve of his temper, which prevented his showing an animation in which he feared his audience might not participate, The same circumstance may have repressed the liveliness of his conversation. I know not, however, whether we are, with Mr Malone, to impute to diffidence his

[1] « When Dryden, our first great master of verse and harmony, brought his play of 'Amphitryon' to the stage, I heard him give it his first reading to the actors, in which, though it is true he delivered the plain sense of every period, yet the whole was in so cold, so flat, and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believed, when I affirm it.»—*Cibber's Apology*, 4to.

general habit of consulting his literary friends upon his poems, before they became public, since it might as well arise from a wish to anticipate and soften criticism.[1]

Of Dryden's learning, his works form the best proof. He had read Polybius before he was ten years of age; and was doubtless well acquainted with the Greek and Roman classics. But from these studies he could descend to read romances; and the present editor records with pride, that Dryden was a decided admirer of old ballads, and popular tales.[2] His researches sometimes extended into the vain province of judicial astrology, in which he was a firm believer; and there is reason to think that he also credited divination by dreams. In the country, he delighted in the pastime of fishing, and used, says Mr Malone, to spend some time with Mr Jones of Ramsden, in Wiltshire. D'Urfey was sometimes of this party; but Dryden appears to have undervalued his skill in fishing, as much as his

[1] See page 130.

[2] « I find,» says Gildon, « Mr Bayes, the younger [Rowe], has two qualities, like Mr Bayes, the elder; his admiration of some odd books, as 'Reynard the Fox,' and the old ballads of 'Jane Shore,' etc.—*Remarks on Mr Rowe's Plays.* 'Reynard the Fox', is also mentioned in 'The Town and Country Mouse', as a favourite book of Dryden's. And Addison, in the 85th number of the Spectator, informs us, that Dorset and Dryden delighted in perusing the collection of old ballads which the latter possessed.

attempts at poetry. Hence Fenton, in his epistle to Mr Lambard:

> « By long experience, D'Urfey may no doubt
> Ensnare a gudgeon, or sometimes a trout;
> Yet Dryden once exclaim'd, in partial spite,
> 'He *fish!*'—because the man attempts to write. »

I may conclude this notice of Dryden's habits, which I have been enabled to give chiefly by the researches of Mr Malone, with two notices of a minute nature. Dryden was a great taker of snuff, which he prepared himself. Moreover, as a preparation to a course of study, he usually took medicine, and observed a cooling diet.

Dryden's house, which he appears to have resided in from the period of his marriage till his death, was in Gerard-street, the fifth on the left hand coming from Little Newport-street. The back windows looked upon the gardens of Leicester-House, of which circumstance our poet availed himself to pay a handsome compliment to the noble owner. His excursions to the country seem to have been frequent; perhaps the more so, as Lady Elizabeth always remained in town. In his latter days the friendship of his relations, John Driden of Chesterton, and Mrs Steward of Cotterstock, rendered their houses agreeable places of abode to the aged poet. They appear also to have had a kind solicitude about his little

comforts, of value infinitely beyond the contributions which they made towards aiding them. And thus concludes all that we have learned of the private life of Dryden.

The fate of Dryden's family must necessarily interest the admirers of English literature. It consisted of his wife, Lady Elizabeth Dryden, and three sons, John, Charles, and Erasmus-Henry. Upon the poet's death, it may be believed, they felt themselves slenderly provided for, since all his efforts, while alive, were necessary to secure them from the gripe of penury. Yet their situation was not very distressing. John and Erasmus-Henry were abroad; and each had an office at Rome, by which he was able to support himself. Charles had for some time been entirely dependent on his father, and administered to his effects, as he died without a will. The liberality of the Duchess of Ormond, and of Driden of Chesterton, had been lately received, and probably was not expended. There was, besides, the poet's little patrimonial estate, and a small property in Wiltshire, which the Earl of Berkshire settled upon Lady Elizabeth at her marriage, and which yielded 50l. or 60l. annually. There was therefore an income of about 100l. a-year, to maintain the poet's widow and children; enough in those times to support them in decent frugality.

Lady Elizabeth Dryden's temper had long

disturbed her husband's domestic happiness. «His invectives,» says Mr Malone, «against the married state, are frequent and bitter, and were continued to the latest period of his life;» and he adds, from most respectable authority, that the family of the poet held no intimacy with his lady, confining their intercourse to mere visits of ceremony. A similar alienation seems to have taken place between her and her own relations, Sir Robert Howard, perhaps, being excepted; for her brother, the Honourable Edward Howard, talks of Dryden's being engaged in a translation of Virgil, as a thing he had learned merely by common report.[1] Her wayward disposition was, however, the effect of a disordered imagination, which, shortly after Dryden's death, degenerated into absolute insanity, in which state she remained until her death in summer 1714, probably, says Mr Malone, in the seventy-ninth year of her life.

Dryden's three sons, says the inscription by Mrs Creed, were ingenious and accomplished gentlemen. Charles, the eldest, and favourite son of the poet, was born at Charlton, Wiltshire, in 1666. He received a classical education under Dr Busby, his father's preceptor, and was chosen King's Scholar in 1680. Being elected to Trinity College in Cambridge, he was ad-

[1] P. 90.

mitted a member in 1683. It would have been difficult for the son of Dryden to refrain from attempting poetry; but though Charles escaped the fate of Icarus, he was very, very far from emulating his father's soaring flight. Mr Malone has furnished a list of his compositions in Latin and English.[1] About 1692, he went to Italy, and through the interest of Cardinal Howard, to whom he was related by the mother's side, he became Chamberlain of the Household; not, as Corinna pretends, «to that *remarkably fine gentleman*, Pope Clement XI.» but to Pope Innocent XII. His way to this preferment was smoothed by a pedigree drawn up in Latin by his father, of the families of Dryden and Howard, which is said to have been deposited in the Vatican. Dryden, whose turn for judicial astrology we have noticed, had calculated the nativity of his son Charles; and it would seem, that a part of his predictions were fortuitously fulfilled. Charles, however, having suffered, while at Rome, by

[1] These are, 1. Latin verses, prefixed to Lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse. 2. Latin verses on the Death of Charles II. published in the Cambridge collection of Elegies on that occasion. 3. A poem in the same language, upon Lord Arlington's Gardens, published in the Second Miscellany. 4. A translation of the seventh Satire of Juvenal, mentioned in the text. 5. An English poem, on the Happiness of a Retired Life. 6. A pretty song, printed by Mr Malone, to which Charles Dryden also composed music.

a fall, and his health, in consequence, being much injured, his father prognosticated he would begin to recover in the month of September 1697. The issue did no great credit to the prediction; for young Dryden returned to England in 1698 in the same indifferent state of health, as is obvious from the anxious solicitude with which his father always mentions Charles in his correspondence. Upon the poet's death, Charles, we have seen, administered to his effects on 10th June, 1700, Lady Elizabeth, his mother, renouncing the succession. In the next year, Granville conferred on him the profits arising from the author's night of an alteration of Shakspeare's «Merchant of Venice;» and his liberality to the son of one great bard may be admitted to balance his presumption, in manufacturing a new drama out of the labours of another.[1] Upon the 20th

[1] The prologue was spoken by the ghosts of Shakspeare and Dryden; from which Mr Malone selects the following curious quotation:—«Mr Bevil Higgons, the writer of it, *ventured* to make the representative of our great dramatic poet speak these lines!

> « These scenes in their rough native dress were mine;
> *But now, improved, with nobler lustre shine:*
> The first rude sketches Shakspeare's pencil drew,
> *But all the shining master-strokes are new.*
> This play, ye critics, shall your fury stand,
> Adorned and rescued by a faultless hand.»

To which our author replies,

> « I long endeavour'd to support the stage,
> With the faint copies of thy nobler rage,
> But toil'd in vain for an ungenerous age.

August, 1704, Charles Dryden was drowned, in an attempt to swim across the Thames, at Datchet, near Windsor. I have degraded into the Appendix, the romantic narrative of Corinna, concerning his father's prediction, already mentioned. It contains, like her account of the funeral of the poet, much positive falsehood, and gross improbability, with some slight scantling of foundation in fact.

John Dryden, the poet's second son, was born in 1667, or 1668, was admitted a King's Scholar in Westminster in 1682, and elected to Oxford in 1685. Here he became a private pupil of the celebrated Obadiah Walker, Master of University College, a Roman Catholic. It seems probable that young Dryden became a convert to that faith before his father. His religion making it impossible for him to succeed in England, he followed his brother Charles to Rome, where he officiated as his deputy in the Pope's household. John Dryden translated the fourteenth Satire of Juvenal, published in his father's version, and wrote a comedy entitled. «The Husband his own Cuckold,» acted in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields in 1696; Dryden, the father, furnishing a prologue, and Congreve an epilogue. In 1700-1,

They starved me living; nay, denied me fame,
And scarce, now dead, do justice to my name.
Would you repent? Be to my ashes kind;
Indulge the pledges I have left behind.» MALONE.

he made a tour through Sicily and Malta, and his journal was published in 1706. It seems odd, that in the whole course of his journal, he never mentions his father's name, nor makes the least allusion to his very recent death. John Dryden, the younger, died at Rome soon after this excursion.

Erasmus-Henry, Dryden's third son, was born 2d May, 1669, and educated in the Charter-House, to which he was nominated by Charles II., shortly after the publication of «Absalom and Achitophel.»[1] He does not appear to have been at any university; probably his religion was the obstacle. Like his brothers, he went to Rome; and as both his father and mother request his prayers, we are to suppose he was originally destined for the church. But he became a captain in the Pope's guards, and remained at Rome till John Dryden, his elder brother's death. After this event, he seems to have returned to England, and in 1708 succeeded to the title of Baronet, as representative of Sir Erasmus Driden, the author's grandfather. But the estate of Canons-Ashby, which should have accompanied and supported the title, had been devised by Sir Robert Driden, the poet's first cousin, to Edward Dryden, the eldest son of Erasmus, the younger brother of the poet.

[1] Page 229.

Thus, if the author had lived a few years longer, his pecuniary embarrassments would have been embittered by his succeeding to the honours of his family, without any means of sustaining the rank they gave him. With this Edward Dryden, Sir Erasmus-Henry seems to have resided until his death, which took place at the family mansion of Canons-Ashby in 1710. Edward acted as a manager of his cousin's affairs; and Mr Malone sees reason to think, from their mode of accounting, that Sir Erasmus-Henry had, like his mother, been visited with mental derangement before his death, and had resigned into Edward's hands the whole management of his concerns. Thus ended the poet's family, none of his sons surviving him above ten years. The estate of Canons-Ashby became again united to the title, in the person of John Dryden, the surviving brother.[1]

[1] Mr Malone says, « Edward Dryden, the eldest son of the last Sir Erasmus Dryden, left by his wife, Elizabeth Allen, who died in London in 1761, five sons; the youngest of whom, Bevil, was father of the present Lady Dryden. Sir John, the eldest, survived all his brothers, and died without issue, at Canons-Ashby, March 20, 1770.»

SECTION VIII.

The State of Dryden's Reputation at his Death, and afterwards—The general Character of his Mind—His Merit as a Dramatist—As a Lyrical Poet—As a Satirist—As a Narrative Poet—As a Philosophical and Miscellaneous Poet—As a Translator—As a Prose Author—As a Critic.

If Dryden received but a slender share of the gifts of fortune, it was amply made up to him in reputation. Even while a poet militant upon earth, he received no ordinary portion of that applause, which is too often reserved for the «dull cold ear of death.» He combated, it is true, but he conquered; and, in despite of faction, civil and religious, of penury, and the contempt which follows it, of degrading patronage, and rejected solicitation, from 1666 to the year of his death, the name of Dryden was first in English literature. Nor was his fame limited to Britain. Of the French literati, although Boileau,[1] with unworthy

[1] Life and Works of Arthur Maynwaring, 1715, p. 17.

affectation, when he heard of the honours paid to the poet's remains, pretended ignorance even of his name, yet Rapin, the famous critic, learned the English language on purpose to read the works of Dryden.[1] Sir John Shadwell, the son of our author's ancient adversary, bore an honourable and manly testimony to the general regret among the men of letters at Paris for the death of Dryden. «The men of letters here lament the loss of Mr Dryden very much. The honours paid to him have done our countrymen no small service; for, next to having so considerable a man of our own growth, 'tis a reputation to have known how to value him; as patrons very often pass for wits, by esteeming those that are so.» And from another authority we learn, that the engraved copies of Dryden's portrait were bought up with avidity on the Continent.[2]

But in England the loss of Dryden was as a national deprivation. It is seldom the extent of such a loss is understood till it has taken place; as the size of an object is best estimated when we see the space void which

[1] So says Charles Blount, in the dedication to the *Religio Laici*. He is contradicted by Tom Brown.

[2] In a poem published on Dryden's death, by Brome, written, as Mr Malone conjectures, by Captain Gibbon, son of the physician.

it has long occupied. The men of literature, starting as it were from a dream, began to heap commemorations, panegyrics, and elegies : the great were as much astonished at their own neglect of such an object of bounty, as if the same omission had never been practised before; and expressed as much compunction, as it were never to occur again. The poets were not silent; but their strains only evinced their woful degeneracy from him whom they mourned. Henry Playford, a publisher of music, collected their effusions into a compilation, entitled, «Luctus Britannici, or the Tears of the British Muses, for the death of John Dryden; » which he published about two months after Dryden's death.[1] Nine ladies, assuming each the cha-

[1] In « The Postboy," for Tuesday, May 7, 1700, Playford inserted the following advertisement:

« The death of the famous John Dryden, Esq., Poet Laureat to their two late Majesties, King Charles, and King James the Second, being a subject capable of employing the best pens; and several persons of quality, and others, having put a stop to his interment, which is designed to be in Chaucer's grave, in Westminster-Abbey; this is to desire the gentlemen of the two famous Universities, and others, who have a respect for the memory of the deceased, and are inclinable to such performances, to send what copies they please, as Epigrams, etc. to Henry Playford, at his shop at the Temple'Change, in Fleet-street, and they shallbe inserted in a Collection, which is designed after

racter of a Muse, and clubbing a funeral ode, or elegy, produced «The Nine Muses.»

The more costly, though equally unsubstantial, honour of a monument, was projected by Montague; and loud were the acclamations of the poets on his generous forgiveness of past discords with Dryden, and the munificence of this universal patron. But Montague never accomplished his purpose, if he seriously entertained it. Pelham, Duke of Newcastle, announced the same intention; received the panegyric of Congreve for having done so; and, having thus pocketed the applause, proceeded no further than Montague had done. At length Pope, in some lines which were rather an epitaph on Dryden, who lay in the vicinity, than on Rowe, over whose tomb they were to be placed,[1] roused Dryden's original patron, Sheffield, formerly Earl of Mulgrave, and now Duke of Buckingham, to erect over the grave of his friend the

the same nature, and in the same method (in what language they shall please), as is usual in the composures which are printed on solemn occasions, at the two Universities aforesaid.»

This advertisement (with some alterations) was continued for a month in the same paper.

[1] «Thy reliques, Rowe, to this fair urn we trust,
And sacred place by Dryden's awful dust:
Beneath a rude and nameless stone he lies,
To which thy tomb shall guide inquiring eyes:

present simple monument which distinguishes it. The inscription was comprised in the following words:—*J. Dryden. Natus* 1632. *Mortuus* 1 *Maii* 1700. *Joannes Sheffield Dux Buckinghamiensis posuit,* 1720.[1]

In the school of reformed English poetry, of which Dryden must be acknowledged as

> Peace to thy gentle shade, and endless rest!
> Blest in thy genius, in thy love too, blest!
> One grateful woman to thy fame supplies,
> What a whole thankless land to his denies.»

[1] The epitaph at first intended by Pope for this monument was,

> «This Sheffield raised; the sacred dust below
> Was Dryden once:—the rest, who does not know?»

Atterbury had thus written to him on this subject, in 1720; «What I said to you in mine, about the monument, was intended only to quicken, not to alarm you. It is not worth your while to know what I meant by it; but when I see you, you shall. I hope you may be at the Deanery towards the end of October, by which time I think of settling there for the winter. What do you think of some such short inscription as this in Latin, which may, in a few words, say all that is to be said of Dryden, and yet nothing more than he deserves?

«JOHANNI DRYDENO,
CUI POESIS ANGLICANA
VIM SUAM AC VENERES DEBET;
ET SI QUA IN POSTERUM AUGEBITUR LAUDE,
EST ADHUC DEBITURA.
HONORIS ERGO P. ETC.

«To show you that I am as much in earnest in the affair

the founder, there soon arose disciples not unwilling to be considered as the rivals of their master. Addison had his partisans, who were desirous to hold him up in this point of view; and he himself is said to have taken pleasure, with the assistance of Steele, to depreciate Dryden, whose fame was defended by Pope and Congreve. No serious invasion of Dryden's pre-eminence can be said, however, to have taken place, till Pope himself, refining upon that structure of versification which our author had first introduced, and

as you yourself, something I will send you of this kind in English. If your design holds, of fixing Dryden's name only below, and his busto above, may not lines like these be graved just under the name?

« This Sheffield raised, to Dryden's ashes just;
Here fix'd his name, and there his laurell'd bust:
What else the Muse in marble might express
Is known already: praise would make him less.

« Or thus:

« More needs not; when acknowledged merits reign,
Praise is impertinent, and censure vain. »

The thought, as Mr Malone observes, is nearly the same as in following lines in « Luctus Britannici, » by William Marston, of Trinity College, Cambridge:

« *In* Joannem Dryden, *poetarum facile principem.*

Si quis in has ædes intret fortasse viator,
Busta poetarum dum veneranda notet,
Cernat et exuvias Drydeni,—plura referre
Haud opus: ad laudes *vox ea* sola satis. »

attending with sedulous diligence to improve every passage to the highest pitch of point and harmony, exhibited a new style of composition, and claimed at least to share with Dryden the sovereignty of Parnassus. I will not attempt to concentrate what Johnson has said upon this interesting comparison:

« In acquired knowledge, the superiority must be allowed to Dryden, whose education was more scholastic, and who, before he became an author, had been allowed more time for study, with better means of information. His mind has a larger range, and he collects his images and illustrations from a more extensive circumference of science. Dryden knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners. The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope.

«Poetry was not the sole praise of either; for both excelled likewise in prose; but Pope did not borrow his prose from his predecessor. The style of Dryden is capricious and varied; that of Pope is cautious and uniform. Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind; Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement

and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller.

«Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality, without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert; that energy, which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred, that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden had more; for every other writer, since Milton, must give place to Pope: and even of Dryden it must be said, that if he has brighter paragraphs, he has not better poems. Dryden's performances were always hasty, either excited by some external occasion, or extorted by domestic necessity; he composed without consideration, and published without correction. What his mind could supply at call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought, and all that he gave. The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden, therefore, are higher, Pope continues longer on the

wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight.»[1]

As the eighteenth century advanced, the difference between the styles of these celebrated authors became yet more manifest. It was then obvious, that though Pope's felicity of expression, his beautiful polish of sentiment, and the occasional brilliancy of his wit, were not easily imitated, yet many authors, by dint of a good ear, and a fluent expression, learned to command the unaltered sweetness of his melody, which, like a favourite tune, which has descended to hawkers and ballad-singers, became palling and even disgusting as it became common. The admirers of poetry then reverted to the brave negligence of Dryden's versification, as, to use Johnson's simile, the eye, fatigued with the uniformity of a lawn, seeks variety in the uncultivated glade or swelling mountain. The preference for which Dennis, asserting the cause of Dryden, had raved and thundered in vain, began, by degrees, to be assigned to the elder bard; and many a poet sheltered his harsh verses

[1] Life of Pope.

and inequalities under an assertion that he belonged to the school of Dryden. Churchill—

> Who, born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind,—

Churchill was one of the first to seek in the « Mac-Flecknoe, » the « Absalom » and the «Hind and Panther,» authority for bitter and personal sarcasm, couched in masculine, though irregular versification, dashed from the pen without revision, and admitting occasional rude and flat passages, to afford the author a spring to comparative elevation. But imitation always approaches to caricature; and the powers of Churchill have been unable to protect him from the oblivion into which his poems are daily sinking, owing to the ephemeral interest of political subjects, and his indolent negligence of severe study and regularity. To imitate Dryden, it were well to study his merits, without venturing to adopt the negligencies and harshness, which the hurry of his composition, and the comparative rudeness of his age, rendered in him excusable. At least, those who venture to sink as low, should be confident of the power of soaring as high; for surely it is a rash attempt to dive, unless in one conscious of ability to swim.

While the beauties of Dryden may be fairly

pointed out as an object of emulation, it is the less pleasing, but not less necessary, duty of his biographer and editor, to notice those deficiencies, which his high and venerable name may excuse, but cannot render proper objects of applause or imitation.

So much occasional criticism has been scattered in various places through these volumes, that, while attempting the consideration of one or two of his distinguishing and pre-eminent compositions, which have been intentionally reserved to illustrate a few pages of general criticism, I feel myself free from the difficult, and almost contradictory task, of drawing my maxims and examples from the extended course of his literary career. My present task is limited to deducing his poetic character from those works which he formed on his last and most approved model. The general tone of his genius, however, influenced the whole course of his publications; and upon that, however modified and varied by the improvement of his taste, a few preliminary notices may not be misplaced.

The distinguishing characteristic of Dryden's genius seems to have been the power of reasoning, and of expressing the result in appropriate language. This may seem slender praise; yet these were the talents that led Bacon into the recesses of philosophy, and conducted Newton to the cabinet of nature.

The prose works of Dryden bear repeated evidence to his philosophical powers. His philosophy was not indeed of a formed and systematic character; for he is often contented to leave the path of argument, which must have conducted him to the fountain of truth, and to resort with indolence or indifference to the leaky cisterns which had been hewn out by former critics. But where his pride or his taste are interested, he shows evidently that it was not deficiency in the power of systematizing, but want of the time and patience necessary to form a system, which occasionad the discrepancy that we often notice in his critical and philological disquisitions. This power of ratiocination, of investigating, discovering, and appreciating that which is really excellent, if accompanied with the necessary command of fanciful illustration, and elegant expression, is the most interesting quality which can be possessed by a poet. It must indeed have a share in the composition of every thing that is truly estimable in the fine arts, as well as in philosophy. Nothing is so easily attained as the power of presenting the extrinsic qualities of fine painting, fine music, or fine poetry; the beauty of colour, and outline, the combination of notes, the melody of versification, may be imitated by artists of mediocrity; and many will view, hear, or peruse their performances, without

being able positively to discover why they should not, since composed according to all the rules, afford pleasure equal to those of Raphael, Handel, or Dryden. The deficiency lies in the vivifying spirit, which, like *alcohol*, may be reduced to the same principle in all the fine arts, though it assumes such varied qualities from the mode in which it is exerted or combined. Of this power of intellect, Dryden seems to have possessed almost an exuberant share, combined, as usual, with the faculty of correcting his own conceptions, by observing human nature, the practical and experimental philosophy as well of poetry as of ethics or physics. The early habits of Dryden's education and poetical studies gave his researches somewhat too much of a metaphysical character; and it was a consequence of his mental acuteness, that his dramatic personages often philosophized or reasoned, when they ought only to have felt. The more lofty, the fiercer, the more ambitious feelings, seem also to have been his favourite studies. Perhaps the analytical mode in which he exercised his studies of human life tended to confine his observation to the more energetic feelings of pride, anger, ambition, and other high-toned passions. He that mixes in public life must see enough of these stormy convulsions; but the finer and more imperceptible operations of love, in its sen-

timental modifications, if the heart of the author does not supply an example from its own feelings, cannot easily be studied at the expence of others. Dryden's bosom, it must be owned, seems to have afforded him no such means of information; the licence of his age, and perhaps the advanced period at which he commenced his literary career, had probably armed him against this more exalted strain of passion. The love of the senses he has in many places expressed, in as forcible and dignified colouring as the subject could admit; but of a mere moral and sentimental passion he seems to have had little idea, since he frequently substitutes in its place the absurd, unnatural, and fictitious refinements of romance. In short, his love is always in indecorous nakedness, or sheathed in the stiff panoply of chivalry. The most pathetic verses which Dryden has composed are unquestionably contained in the epistle to Congreve, where he recommends his laurels, in such moving terms, to the care of his surviving friend. The quarrel and reconciliation of Sebastian and Dorax is also full of the noblest emotion. In both cases, however, the interest is excited by means of masculine and exalted passion, not of those which arise from the mere delicate sensibilities of our nature; and, to use a Scottish phrase, «bearded

men» weep at them, rather than Horace's audience of youths and maidens.

But if Dryden fails in expressing the milder and more tender passions, not only did the stronger feelings of the heart, in all its dark or violent workings, but the face of natural objects, and their operation upon the human mind, pass promptly in review at his command. External pictures, and their corresponding influence on the spectator, are equally ready at his summons; and though his poetry, from the nature of his subjects, is in general rather ethic and didactic than narrative, yet no sooner does he adopt the latter style of composition, than his figures and his landscapes are presented to the mind with the same vivacity as the flow of his reasoning, or the acute metaphysical discrimination of his characters.

Still the powers of observation and of deduction are not the only qualities essential to the poetical character. The philosopher may indeed prosecute his experimental researches into the *arcana* of nature, and announce them to the public through the medium of a friendly *redacteur*, as the legislator of Israel obtained permission to speak to the people by the voice of Aaron; but the poet has no such privilege; nay, his doom is so far capricious, that, though he may be possessed of the primary quality

of poetical conception to the highest possible extent, it is but like a lute without its strings, unless he has the subordinate, though equally essential, power of expressing what he feels and conceives, in appropriate and harmonious language. With this power Dryden's poetry was gifted, in a degree, surpassing in modulated harmony that of all who had preceded him, and inferior to none that has since written English verse. He first showed that the English language was capable of uniting smoothness and strength. The hobbling verses of his predecessors were abandoned even by the lowest versifiers; and by the force of his precept and example, the meanest lampooners of the year seventeen hundred wrote smoother lines than Donne and Cowley, the chief poets of the earlier half of the seventeenth century. What was said of Rome adorned by Augustus has been, by Johnson, applied to English poetry improved by Dryden; that he found it of brick, and left it of marble. This reformation was not merely the effect of an excellent ear, and a superlative command of gratifying it by sounding language; it was, we have seen, the effect of close, accurate, and continued study of the power of the English tongue. Upon what principles he adopted and continued his system of versification, he long meditated to communicate in his projected prosody of Eng-

lish poetry. The work, however, might have been more curious than useful, as there would have been some danger of its diverting the attention, and misguiding the efforts of poetical adventurers; for as it is more easy to be masons than architects, we may deprecate an art which might teach the world to value those who can build rhymes, without attending to the more essential qualities of poetry. Strict attention might no doubt discover the principle of Dryden's versification; but it seems no more essential to the analysing his poetry, than the principles of mathematics to understanding music, although the art necessarily depends on them. The extent in which Dryden reformed our poetry, is most readily proved by an appeal to the ear; and Dr Johnson has forcibly stated, that «he knew how to choose the flowing and the sonorous words; to vary the pauses and adjust the accents; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of the metre.» To vary the English hexameter, he established the use of the triplet and Alexandrine. Though ridiculed by Swift, who vainly thought he had exploded them for ever, their force is still acknowledged in classical poetry.

Of the various kinds of poetry which Dryden occasionally practised, the drama was that which, until the last six years of his life, he chiefly relied on for support. His style of

tragedy, we have seen, varied with his improving taste, perhaps with the change of manners. Although the heroic drama, as we have described it at length in the preceding pages, presented the strongest temptation to the exercise of argumentative poetry in sounding rhyme, Dryden was at length contented to abandon it for the more pure and chaste style of tragedy, which professes rather the representation of human beings, than the creation of ideal perfection, or fantastic and anomalous characters. The best of Dryden's performances in this latter style are unquestionably «Don Sebastian,» and «All for Love.» Of these, the former is in the poet's very best manner; exhibiting dramatic persons, consisting of such bold and impetuous characters as he delighted to draw, well contrasted, forcibly marked, and engaged in an interesting succession of events. To many tempers, the scene between Sebastian and Dorax, already noticed, must appear one of the most moving that ever adorned the British stage. Of «All for Love,» we may say, that it is successful in a softer style of painting; and that so far as sweet and beautiful versification, elegant language, and occasional tenderness, can make amends for Dryden's deficiencies in describing the delicacies of sentimental passion, they are to be found in abundance in that piece. But on these, and on the poet's other trage-

dies, we have enlarged in our preliminary notices prefixed to each piece.

Dryden's comedies, besides being stained with the license of the age (a license which he seems to use as much from necessity as choice), have, generally speaking, a certain heaviness of character. There are many flashes of wit; but the author has beaten his flint hard ere he struck them out. It is almost essential to the success of a jest, that it should at least seem to be extemporaneous. If we espy the joke at a distance, nay, if without seeing it we have the least reason to suspect we are travelling towards one, it is astonishing how the perverse obstinacy of our nature delights to refuse its currency. When, therefore, as is often the case in Dryden's comedies, two persons remain on the stage for no obvious purpose but to say good things, it is no wonder they receive but little thanks from an ungrateful audience. The incidents, therefore, and the characters, ought to be comic; but actual jests, or *bon mots*, should be rarely introduced, and then naturally, easily, without an appearance of premeditation, and bearing a strict conformity to the character of the person who utters them. Comic situation Dryden did not greatly study; indeed I hardly recollect any scene, unless the closing one of "The Spanish Friar," which indicates any peculiar felicity of invention. For comic

character, he is usually contented to paint a generic representative of a certain class of men or women; a Father Dominic, for example, or a Melantha, with all the attributes of their calling and manners, strongly and divertingly pourtrayed, but without any individuality of character. It is probable that, with these deficiencies, he felt the truth of his own acknowledgment, and that he was forced upon composing comedies to gratify the taste of the age, while the bent of his genius was otherwise directed.

In lyrical poetry, Dryden must be allowed to have no equal. «Alexander's Feast» is sufficient to show his supremacy in that brilliant department. In this exquisite production, he flung from him all the trappings with which his contemporaries had embarrassed the ode. The language, lofty and striking as the ideas are, is equally simple and harmonious; without far-fetched allusions, or epithets, or metaphors, the story is told as intelligibly as if it had been in the most humble prose. The change of tone in the harp of Timotheus, regulates the measure and the melody, and the language of every stanza. The hearer, while he is led on by the successive changes, experiences almost the feelings of the Macedonian and his peers; nor is the splendid poem disgraced by one word or line unworthy of it, unless we join in the severe criticism of Dr

Johnson, on the concluding stanzas. It is true, that the praise of St Cecilia is rather abruptly introduced as a conclusion to the account of the Feast of Alexander, and it is also true, that the comparison,

> He raised a mortal to the sky,
> She drew an angel down,

is inaccurate, since the fate of Timotheus was metaphorical, and that of Cecilia literal. But, while we stoop to such criticism, we seek for blots in the sun.

Of Dryden's other pindarcis, some, as the celebrated « Ode to the Memory of Mrs Killigrew,» are mixed with the leaven of Cowley; others, like the « *Threnodia Augustalis*,» are occasionally flat and heavy. All contain passages of brilliancy, and all are thrown into a versification, melodious amidst its irregularity. We listen for the completion of Dryden's stanza, as for the explication of a difficult passage in music, and wild and lost as the sound appears, the ear is proportionally gratified by the unexpected ease with which harmony is extracted from discord and confusion.

The satirical powers of Dryden were of the highest order. He draws his arrow to the head, and dismisses it straight upon his object of aim. In this walk he wrought almost as great a reformation as upon versification in

general, as will plainly appear, if we consider that the satire, before Dryden's time, bore the same reference to «Absalom and Achitophel,» which an ode of Cowley bears to «Alexander's Feast.» Butler, and his imitators, had adopted a metaphysical satire, as the poets in the earlier part of the century had created a metaphysical vein of serious poetry.[1] Both required store of learning to supply the perpetual expenditure of extraordinary and far-fetched illustration; the object of both was to combine and hunt down the strangest and most fanciful analogies, and both held the attention of the reader perpetually on the stretch, to keep up with the meaning of the author. There can be no doubt, that this metaphysical vein was much better fitted for the burlesque than the sublime. Yet the perpetual scintillation of Butler's wit is too dazzling to be delightful, and we can seldom read far in «Hudibras» without feeling more fatigue than pleasure. His fancy is employed with the profusion of a spendthrift, by whose eternal round of banqueting his guests are at length rather wearied out than regaled. Dryden was destined to correct this among other errors of his age; to show the difference between burlesque and satire; and to teach his successors in that species of assault, rather

[1] Seed. p. 42

to thrust than to flourish with their weapon. For this purpose he avoided the unvaried and unrelieved style of grotesque description and combination, which had been fashionable since the satires of Cleveland and Butler. To render the objects of his satire hateful and contemptible, he thought it necessary to preserve the lighter shades of character, if not for the purpose of softening the portrait, at least for that of preserving the likeness. While Dryden seized, and dwelt upon, and aggravated, all the evil features of his subject, he carefully retained just as much of its laudable traits as preserved him from the charge of want of candour, and fixed down the resemblance upon the party. And thus, instead of unmeaning caricatures, he presents portraits which cannot be mistaken, however unfavourable ideas they may convey of the originals. The character of Shaftesbury, both as Achitophel, and as drawn in «The Medal,» bears peculiar witness to this assertion. While other court poets endeavour to turn the obnoxious statesman into ridicule, on account of his personal infirmities and extravagancies, Dryden boldly confers upon him all the praise for talent and for genius that his friends could have claimed, and trusts to the force of his satirical expression for working up even these admirable attributes with such a mixture of evil propensities and dangerous qualities,

that the whole character shall appear dreadful, and even hateful, but not contemptible. But where a character of less note, a Shadwell or a Settle, crossed his path, the satirist did not lay himself under these restraints, but wrote in the language of bitter irony and unmeasurable contempt: even then, however, we are less called on to admire the wit of the author than the force and energy of his poetical philippic. These are the verses which are made by indignation, and, no more than theatrical scenes of real passion admit of refined and protracted turns of wit, or even the lighter sallies of humour. These last ornaments are proper in that Horatian satire, which rather ridicules the follies of the age than stigmatizes the vices of individuals; but in this style Dryden has made few essays. He entered the field as champion of a political party, or as defender of his own reputation; discriminated his antagonists, and applied the scourge with all the vehemence of Juvenal. As he has himself said of that satirist, « his provocations were great, and he has revenged them tragically.» This is the more worthy of notice, as, in the Essay on Satire, Dryden gives a decided preference to those nicer and more delicate touches of satire, which consist in fine raillery. But whatever was the opinion of his cooler moments, the poet's practice was dictated by the furious party-spirit of the

times, and the no less keen stimulative of personal resentment. It is perhaps to be regretted, that so much energy of thought, and so much force of expression, should have been wasted in anatomising such criminals as Shadwell and Settle; yet we cannot account the amber less precious, because they are grubs and flies that are inclosed within it.

The « Fables» of Dryden are the best examples of his talents as a narrative poet; those powers of composition, description, and narration, which must have been called into exercise by the Epic Muse, had his fate allowed him to enlist among her votaries. The « Knight's Tale,» the longest and most laboured of Chaucer's stories, possesses a degree of regularity which might satisfy the most severe critic. It is true, that the honour arising from thence must be assigned to the more ancient bard, who had himself drawn his subject from an Italian model; but the high and decided preference which Dryden has given to this story, although somewhat censured by Trapp, enables us to judge how much the poet held an accurate combination of parts, and coherence of narrative, essentials of epic poetry.[1] That a classic scholar like

[1] « *Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore*

Trapp should think the plan of the « Knight's Tale» equal to that of the Iliad, is a degree of candour not to be hoped for; but surely to an unprejudiced reader, a story which exhausts in its conclusion all the interest which it has excited in its progress, which, when terminated, leaves no question to be asked, no personage undisposed of, and no curiosity unsatisfied, is, abstractedly considered, more gratifying than the history of a few weeks of a ten years' war, commencing long after the siege had begun, and ending long before the city was taken. Of the other tales, it can hardly be said that their texture is more ingenious or closely woven than that of ordinary novels or fables: but in each of them Dryden has displayed the superiority of his genius, in selecting for amplification and ornament those passages most susceptible of poetical description. The account of the procession of the Fairy Chivalry in the « Flower and the Leaf;» the splendid description of the champions who came to assist at the tournament in the « Knight's Tale;» the account of the battle itself, its alternations and issue,—if they cannot be called improvements on Chaucer, are nevertheless so spirited a transfusion of his

viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo judice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur.»

ideas into modern verse, as almost to claim the merit of originality. Many passages might be shown in which this praise may be carried still higher, and the merit of invention added to that of imitation. Such is the description of the commencement of the tourney, which is almost entirely original, and most of the ornaments in the translations from Boccacio, whose prose fictions demanded more additions from the poet than the exuberant imagery of Chaucer. To select instances would be endless; but every reader of poetry has by heart the description of Iphigenia asleep, nor are the lines in «Theodore and Honoria,»[1] which describe the approach of the apparition, and its effects upon animated and inanimated nature, even before it becomes visible, less eminent for beauties of the terrific order:

«While listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,
More than a mile immersed within the wood,
At once the wind was laid: the whispering sound
Was dumb; a rising earthquake rocked the ground;
With deeper brown the grove was overspread,
A sudden horror seized his giddy head,
And his ears tingled, and his colour fled.
Nature was in alarm; some danger nigh
Seem'd threaten'd, though unseen to mortal eye.»

[1] Dryden was not the first who translated this tale of terror. There is in the collection of the late John, Duke of Roxburghe, «A Notable History of Nastagio and Traversary, no less pitiful than pleasant; translated out of Italian into English verse, by C. T. London, 1569.

It may be doubted, however, whether the simplicity of Boccacio's narrative has not sometimes suffered by the additional decorations of Dryden. The retort of Guiscard to Tancred's charge of ingratitude is more sublime in the Italian original[2] than as diluted by the English poet into five hexameters. A worse fault occurs in the whole colouring of Sigismonda's passion, to which Dryden has given a coarse and indelicate character, which he did not derive from Boccacio, though the Italian be apt enough to sin in that particular. In like manner, the plea used by Palamon in his prayer to Venus is more nakedly expressed by Dryden than by Chaucer. The former, indeed, would probably have sheltered himself under the mantle of Lucretius; but he should have recollected, that Palamon speaks the language of chivalry, and ought not, to use an expression of Lord Herbert, to have spoken like a *paillard*, but *cavalier*. Indeed, we have before noticed it as the most obvious and most degrading imperfection of Dryden's poetical imagination, that he could not refine that passion, which, of all others, is susceptible either of the purest refinement, or of admitting the basest alloy. With Chaucer,

[2] « *Amor puo troppo piu, che ne voi ne io possiamo.*» This sentiment loses its dignity amid the « levelling of mountains and raising plains,» with which Dryden has chosen to illustrate it.

Dryden's task was more easy than with Boccacio. Barrenness was not the fault of the Father of English poetry; and amid the profusion of images which he presented, his imitator had only the task of rejecting or selecting. In the sublime description of the temple of Mars, painted around with all the misfortunes ascribed to the influence of his planet, it would be difficult to point out a single idea, which is not found in the older poem. But Dryden has judiciously omitted or softened some degrading and some disgusting circumstances, as the « cook scalded in spite of his long ladle, » the « swine devouring the cradled infant, » the « pick-purse, » and other circumstances too grotesque or ludicrous to harmonize with the dreadful group around them. Some points, also, of sublimity, have escaped the modern poet. Such is the appropriate and picturesque accompaniment of the statue of Mars:

> A wolf stood before him at his feet,
> With eyen red, and of a man he eat. [1]

In the dialogue, or argumentative parts of the poem, Dryden has frequently improved on his original, while he falls something short of him in simple description, or in pathetic effect. Thus, the quarrel between Arcite and Palamon

[1] An emblem of a similar kind (a tiger devouring a man) was found in the palace of Tippoo Sultan.

is wrought up with greater energy by Dryden than Chaucer, particularly by the addition of the following lines, describing the enmity of the captives against each other:

> Now friends no more, nor walking hand in hand,
> But when they met, they made a surly stand,
> And glared like angry lions as they pass'd,
> And wish'd that every look might be their last.

But the modern must yield the palm, despite the beauty of his versification, to the description of Emily by Chaucer; and may be justly accused of loading the dying speech of Arcite with conceits for which his original gave no authority.[1]

When the story is of a light and ludicrous kind, as the Fable of the Cock and Fox, and the Wife of Bath's Tale, Dryden displays all the humorous expression of his satirical poetry, without its personality. There is indeed a quaint Cervantic gravity in his mode of expressing himself, that often glances forth, and enlivens what otherwise would be mere dry nar-

[1] As «Near bliss, and yet not blessed,» and this merciless quibble, where Arcite complains of the flames he endures for Emily:

> Of such a goddess no time leaves record,
> Who burnt the temple where she was adored.

Yet Dryden, in the preface, declaims against the «*inopem me copia fecit*,» and similar jingles of Ovid.

rative. Thus, he details certain things which passed,

> While Cymon was *endeavouring* to be wise;

the force of which single word contains both a ludicrous and appropriate picture of the revolution which the force of love was gradually creating in the mind of the poor clown. The tone of expression he perhaps borrowed from Ariosto, and other poets of Italian chivalry, who are wont ever and anon to raise the mask, and smile even at the romantic tale they are themselves telling.

Leaving these desultory reflections on Dryden's powers of narrative, I cannot but notice that, from haste or negligence, he has sometimes mistaken the sense of his author. Into the hands of the champions in the « Flower and the Leaf,» he has placed *bows* instead of *boughs*, because the word is in the original spelled *bowes;* and, having made the error, he immediately devises an explanation of the device which he had mistaken :

> For bows the strength of brawny arms imply,
> Emblems of valour, and of victory.

He has, in like manner, accused Chaucer of introducing Gallicisms into the English language; not aware that French was the language of the court of England not long before

Chaucer's time, and that, far from introducing French phrases into the English tongue, the ancient bard was successfully active in introducing the English as a fashionable dialect, instead of the French, which had, before his time, been the only language of polite literature in England. Other instances might be given of similar oversights, which, in the situation of Dryden, are sufficiently pardonable.

Upon the whole, in introducing these romances of Boccacio and Chaucer to modern readers, Dryden has necessarily deprived them of some of the charms which they possess for those who have perused them in their original state. With a tale or poem, by which we have been sincerely interested, we connect many feelings independent of those arising from actual poetical merit. The delight, arising from the whole, sanctions, nay sanctifies, the faulty passages; and even actual improvements, like supplements to a mutilated statue of antiquity, injure our preconceived associations, and hurt, by their incongruity with our feelings, more than they give pleasure by their own excellence. But to antiquaries Dryden has sufficiently justified himself, by declaring his version made for the sake of modern readers, who understand sense and poetry, as well as the old Saxon admirers of Chaucer, when that poetry and sense are put into words which they can understand. Let us also grant him,

that, for the beauties which are lost, he has substituted many which the original did not afford; that, in passages of gorgeous description, he has added even to the chivalrous splendour of Chaucer, and has graced with poetical ornament the simplicity of Boccacio; that, if he has failed in tenderness, he is never deficient in majesty; and that if the heart be sometimes untouched, the understanding and fancy are always exercised and delighted.

The philosophy of Dryden, we have already said, was that of original and penetrating genius; imperfect only when, from want of time and of industry, he adopted the ideas of others, when he should have communed at leisure with his own mind. The proofs of his philosophical powers are not to be sought for in any particular poem or disquisition. Even the « Religio Laici, » written expressly as a philosophical poem, only shows how easily the most powerful mind may entangle itself in sophistical toils of its own weaving; for the train of argument there pursued was completed by Dryden's conversion to the Roman Catholic faith.[1] It is therefore in the discussion of incidental subjects, in his mode of treating points of controversy, in the new lights which he seldom fails to throw upon a controversial subject, in his talent of argumentative discus-

[1] See vol. II. p. 9.

sion, that we are to look for the character of Dryden's moral powers. His opinions, doubtless, are often inconsistent, and sometimes absolutely contradictory; for, pressed by the necessity of discussing the object before him, he seldom looked back to what he said formerly, or forward to what he might be obliged to say in future. His sole subject of consideration was to maintain his present point; and that by authority, by declamation, by argument, by every means. But his philosophical powers are not the less to be estimated, because thus irregularly and unphilosophically employed. His arguments, even in the worst cause, bear witness to the energy of his mental conceptions; and the skill with which they are stated, elucidated, enforced, and exemplified, ever commands our admiration, though, in the result, our reason may reject their influence. It must be remembered also, to Dryden's honour, that he was the first to hail the dawn of experimental philosophy in physics; to gratulate his country on possessing Bacon, Harvey, and Boyle; and to exult over the downfall of the Aristotelian tyranny.[1] Had he lived to see a similiar revolution commenced in ethics, there can be little doubt he would have wel-

[1] « The longest tyranny that ever sway'd,
Was that wherein our ancestors betray'd
Their free-born reason to the Stagyrite,
And made his torch their universal light.

comed it with the same delight; or, had his leisure and situation permitted him to dedicate his time to investigating moral problems, he might himself have led the way to deliverance from error and uncertainty. But the dawn of reformation must ever be gradual, and the acquisitions even of those calculated to advance it must therefore frequently appear desultory and imperfect. The author of the *Novum Organum* believed in charms and occult sympathy; and Dryden in the chimeras of judicial astrology, and probably in the jargon of alchemy. When these subjects occur in his poetry, he dwells on them with a pleasure, which shows the command they maintained over his mind. Much of the astrological knowledge displayed in the Knight's Tale is introduced, or at least amplified, by Dryden; and while, in the fable of the Cock and the Fox, he ridicules the doctrine of prediction from dreams, the inherent qualities of the four complexions,[1] and other abstruse doctrines of

So truth, while only one supplied the state,
Grew scarce, and dear, and yet sophisticate.
Still it was bought, like emp'ric wares, or charms,
Hard words seal'd up with Aristotle's arms.»

[1] These I found quaintly summed up in an old rhyme:—

With a red man read thy rede,
With a brown man break thy bread,
On a pale man draw thy knife,
From a black man keep thy wife.

Paracelsus and his followers, we have good reason to suspect that, like many other scoffers, he believed in the efficacy and truth of the subject of his ridicule. However this shade of credulity may injure Dryden's character as a philosopher, we cannot regret its influence on his poetry. Collins has thus celebrated Fairfax:

> Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind
> Believed the magic wonders which he sung.

Nor can there be a doubt, that, as every work of imagination is tinged with the author's passions and prejudices, it must be deep and energetic in proportion to the character of these impressions. Those superstitious sciences and pursuits, which would, by mystic rites, doctrines, and inferences, connect us with the invisible world of spirits, or guide our daring researches to a knowledge of future events, are indeed usually found to cow, crush, and utterly stupify, understandings of a lower rank; but if the mind of a man of acute powers, and of warm fancy, becomes slightly imbued with the visionary feelings excited by such studies, their obscure and undefined influence is ever found to aid the sublimity of his ideas, and to give that sombre and serious effect, which he can never produce, who does not himself feel the awe which it is his object to excite. The influ-

ence of such a mystic creed is often felt where the cause is concealed; for the habits thus acquired are not confined to their own sphere of belief, but gradually extend themselves over every adjacent province: and perhaps we may not go too far in believing, that he who has felt their impression, though only in one branch of faith, becomes fitted to describe, with an air of reality and interest, not only kindred subjects, but superstitions altogether opposite to his own. The religion which Dryden finally adopted lent its occasional aid to the solemn colouring of some of his later productions, upon which subject we have elsewhere enlarged at some length.[1]

The occasional poetry of Dryden is marked strongly by masculine character. The Epistles vary with the subject, and are light, humorous, and satirical, or grave, argumentative, and philosophical, as the case required. In his Elegies, although they contain touches of true feeling, especially where the stronger passions are to be illustrated, the poet is often content to substitute reasoning for passion, and rather to show us cause why we ought to grieve, than to set us the example by grieving himself. The inherent defect in Dryden's composition becomes here peculiarly conspicuous; yet we should consider, that, in

[1] See the introduction to Britannia Rediviva.

composing elegies for the Countess of Abingdon, whom he never saw, and for Charles II., by whom he had been cruelly neglected, and doubtless on many similar occasions, Dryden could not even pretend to be interested in the mournful subject of his verse; but attended, with his poem, as much in the way of trade, as the undertaker, on the same occasion, came with his sables and his scutcheon. The poet may interest himself and his reader, even to tears, in the fate of a being altogether the creation of his own fancy, but hardly by a hired panegyric on a real subject, in whom his heart acknowledges no other interest than a fee can give him. Few of Dryden's elegiac effusions, therefore, seem prompted by sincere sorrow. That to Oldham may be an exception; but, even there, he rather strives to do honour to the talents of his departed friend than to pour out lamentations for his loss. Of the Prologues and Epilogues we have spoken fully elsewhere. Some of them are coarsely satirical, and others grossly indelicate. Those spoken at Oxford are the most valuable, and contain much good criticism and beautiful poetry. But the worst of them was probably well worth the petty recompense which the poet received.[1] The songs and

[1] It is stated on the authority of the «Life of Southerne,» that Dryden had originally five guineas for each prologue, and raised the sum to ten guineas on occasion of South-

smaller pieces of Dryden have smoothness, wit, and, when addressed to ladies, gallantry in profusion, but are deficient in tenderness. They seem to have been composed with great ease; thrown together hastily and occasionally; nor can we doubt, that many of them are now irrecoverably lost. Mr Malone gives us an instance of Dryden's fluency in extempore composition, which was communicated to him by Mr Walcott. « Conversation, one day after dinner, at Mrs Creed's, running upon the origin of names, Mr Dryden bowed to the good old lady, and spoke extempore the following verses:

« So much religion in *your* name doth dwell,
Your soul must needs with piety excel.
Thus names, like [well-wrought] pictures drawn of old,
Their owners' nature and their story told.—
Your name but half expresses; for in you
Belief and practice do together go.
My prayers shall be, while this short life endures,
These may go hand in hand, with you and yours;
Till faith hereafter is in vision drown'd,
And practice is with endless glory crown'd.

The translations of Dryden form a distinguished part of his poetical labours. No author, excepting Pope, has done so much to endenizen the eminent poets of antiquity. In

erne's requiring such a favour for his first play. But I am convinced the sum is exaggerated; and incline now to believe, with Dr Johnson, that the advance was from *two* to *three* guineas only.

this sphere also, it was the fate of Dryden to become a leading example to future poets, and to abrogate laws which had been generally received, although they imposed such trammels on translation as to render it hardly intelligible. Before his distinguished success showed that the object of the translator should be to transfuse the spirit, not to copy servilely the very words of his original, it had been required, that line should be rendered for line, and, almost, word for word. It may easily be imagined that, by the constraint and inversion which this cramping statute required, a poem was barely rendered *not Latin*, instead of being made English, and that, to the mere native reader, as the connoisseur complains in « The Critic,» the interpreter was sometimes « the harder to be understood of the two.» Those who seek examples may find them in the jaw-breaking translations of Ben Jonson and Holyday. Cowley and Denham had indeed rebelled against this mode of translation, which conveys pretty much the same idea of an original, as an imitator would do of the gait of another, by studiously stepping after him into every trace which his feet had left upon the sand. But they assumed a license equally faulty, and claimed the privilege of writing what might be more properly termed imitations, than versions of the classics. It was reserved to Dryden manfully to

claim and vindicate the freedom of a just translation, more limited than paraphrase, but free from the metaphrastic severity exacted from his predecessors.

With these free, yet unlicentious principles, Dryden brought to the task of translation a competent knowledge of the language of the originals, with an unbounded command of his own. The latter is, however, by far the most marked characteristic of his translations. Dryden was not indeed deficient in Greek and Roman learning; but he paused not to weigh and sift those difficult and obscure passages, at which the most learned will doubt and hesitate for the correct meaning. The same rapidity, which marked his own poetry, seems to have attended his study of the classics. He seldom waited to analyse the sentence he was about to render, far less scrupulously to weigh the precise purport and value of every word it contained. If he caught the general spirit and meaning of the author, and could express it with equal force in English verse, he cared not if minute elegancies were lost, or the beauties of accurate proportion destroyed, or a dubious interpretation hastily adopted on the credit of a *scholium*. He used abundantly the licence he has claimed for a translator, to be deficient rather in the language out of which he renders, than that into which he translates. If such be but

master of the sense of his author, Dryden argues, he may express that sense with eloquence in his own tongue, though he understand not the nice turns of the original. «But without the latter quality he can never arrive at the useful and the delightful, without which reading is a penance and fatigue.»[1] With the same spirit of haste, Dryden is often contented to present to the English reader some modern image, which he may at once fully comprehend, instead of rendering precisely a classic expression, which might require explanation or paraphrase. Thus the *pulchra Sicyonia*, or buskins of Sicyon, are rendered,

> «Diamond-buckles sparkling in their shoes.»

By a yet more unfortunate adaptation of modern technical phraseology, the simple direction of Helenus,

> «*Læva tibi tellus, et longo læva petantur*
> *Æquora circuitu: dextrum fuge littus et undas,*»

is translated,

> «Tack to the larboard, and stand off to sea,
> Veer starboard sea and land.»——

A counsel which, I shrewdly suspect, would have been unintelligible, not only to Palinurus, but to the best pilot in the British navy.

[1] Life of Lucian.

In the same tone, but with more intelligibility, if not felicity, Dryden translates *palatia cœli* in Ovid, the *Louvre of the sky;* and, in the version of the First Book of Homer, talks of the court of Jupiter in the phrases used at that of Whitehall. These expressions, proper to modern manners, often produce an unfortunate confusion between the age in which the scene is laid, and the date of the translation.

No judicious poet is willing to break the interest of tales of ancient times, by allusions peculiar to his own period; but when the translator, instead of identifying himself as closely as possible with the original author, pretends to such liberty, he removes us a third step from the time of action, and so confounds the manners of no less than three distinct eras, — that in which the scene is laid, that in which the poem was written, and that, finally, in which the translation was executed. There are passages in Dryden's Æneid, which, in the revolution of a few pages, transport our ideas from the time of Troy's siege to that of the court of Augustus, and thence downward to the reign of William the Third of Britain.

It must be owned, at the same time, that when the translator places before you, not the exact words, but the image of the original, as the classic author would probably have himself expressed it in English, the licence,

when moderately employed, has an infinite charm for those readers for whose use translations are properly written. Pope's Homer and Dryden's Virgil can never indeed give exquisite satisfaction to scholars accustomed to study the Greek and Latin originals. The minds of such readers have acquired a classic tone; and not merely the ideas and poetical imagery, but the manners and habits of the actors, have become intimately familiar to them. They will not, therefore, be satisfied with any translation in which these are violated, whether for the sake of indolence in the translator, or ease to the unlettered reader: and perhaps they will be more pleased that a favourite bard should move with less ease and spirit in his new habiliments, than that his garments should be cut upon the model of the country to which the stranger is introduced. In the former case, they will readily make allowance for the imperfection of modern language; in the latter, they will hardly pardon the sophistication of ancient manners. But the mere English reader, who finds rigid adherence to antique costume rather embarrassing than pleasing, who is prepared to make no sacrifices in order to preserve the true manners of antiquity, shocking perhaps to his feelings and prejudices, is satisfied that the Iliad and Æneid shall lose their antiquarian merit, provided they retain that vital spirit

and energy, which is the soul of poetry in all languages, and countries, and ages whatsoever. He who sits down to Dryden's translation of Virgil, with the original text spread before him, will be at no loss to point out many passages that are faulty, many indifferently understood, many imperfectly translated, some in which dignity is lost, others in which bombast is substituted in its stead. But the unabated vigour and spirit of the version more than overbalances these and all its other deficiencies. A sedulous scholar might often approach more nearly to the dead letter of Virgil, and give an exact, distinct, sober-minded idea of the meaning and scope of particular passages. Trapp, Pitt, and others have done so. But the essential spirit of poetry is so volatile, that it escapes during such an operation, like the life of the poor criminal, whom the ancient anatomist is said to have dissected alive, in order to ascertain the seat of the soul. The carcase indeed is presented to the English reader, but the animating vigour is no more. It is in this art of communicating the ancient poet's ideas with force and energy equal to his own, that Dryden has so completely exceeded all who have gone before, and all who have succeeded him. The beautiful and unequalled version of the Tale of Myrrha in the « Metamorphoses,» the whole of the Sixth Æneid, and many other parts of

Dryden's translations, are sufficient, had he never written one line of original poetry, to vindicate the well-known panegyric of Churchill:

«Here let me bend, great Dryden, at thy shrine,
Thou dearest name to all the tuneful Nine!
What if some dull lines in cold order creep,
And with his theme the poet seems to sleep?
Still, when his subject rises proud to view,
With equal strength the poet rises too:
With strong invention, noblest vigour fraught,
Thought still springs up, and rises out of thought;
Numbers ennobling numbers in the course,
In varied sweetness flow, in varied force;
The powers of genius and of judgment join,
And the whole art of poetry is thine.»

We are in this disquisition naturally tempted to inquire, whether Dryden would have succeeded in his proposed design to translate Homer, as happily as his Virgil. And although he himself has declared the genius of the Grecian to be more fiery, and therefore better suited to his own than that of the Roman poet, there may be room to question, whether in this case, he rightly estimated his own talents, or rather, whether, being fully conscious of their extent, he was aware of labouring under certain deficiencies of taste, which must have been more apparent in a version of the Iliad than of the Æneid. If a translator has any characteristic and peculiar foible, it is surely unfortunate to choose an original who

may give peculiar facilities to exhibit them. Thus, even Dryden's repeated disclamation of puns, points, and quibbles, and all the repentance of his more sober hours, was unable, so soon as he began to translate Ovid, to prevent his sliding back into the practice of that false wit with which his earlier productions are imbued. Hence he has been seduced, by the similarity of style, to add to the offences of his original, and introduce, though it needed not, points of wit and antithetical prettinesses, for which he cannot plead Ovid's authority. For example, he makes Ajax say of Ulysses, when surrounded by the Trojans,

> « No wonder if he roar'd that all might hear,
> His elocution was increased by fear. »

The Latin only bears, *conclamat socios*. A little lower,

> « *Opposui molem clypei, texique jacentem,* »

is amplified by a similar witticism,

> ——« My broad buckler hid him from the foe,
> Even the shield trembled as he lay below. »

If, in translating Ovid, Dryden was tempted by the manner of his original to relapse into a youthful fault, which he had solemnly repented of and abjured, there is surely room to believe, that the simple and almost rude manners described by Homer, might have seduced

him into coarseness both of ideas and expression, for which the studied, composed, and dignified style of the Æneid gave neither opening nor apology. That this was a fault which Dryden, with all his taste, never was able to discard, might easily be proved from various passages in his translations, where the transgression is on his own part altogether gratuitous. Such is the well-known version of

> ———— « *Ut possessor agelli*
> *Diceret hæc mea sunt, veteres migrate coloni,*
> *Nunc victi,* » etc.
>
> « When the grim captain, with a surly tone,
> Cries out, Pack up, ye rascals, and be gone!
> Kick'd out, we set the best face on't we could, » etc.

In translating the most indelicate passage of Lucretius, Dryden has rather enhanced than veiled its indecency. The story of Iphis in the Metamorphoses is much more bluntly told by the English poet than by Ovid. In short, where there was a latitude given for coarseness of description and expression, Dryden has always too readily laid hold of it. The very specimen which he has given us of a version of Homer contains many passages in which the antique Grecian simplicity is vulgarly and inelegantly rendered. The Thunderer terms Juno

> « My household curse, my lawful plague, the spy
> Of Jove's designs, his other squinting eye. »

The ambrosial feast of Olympus concludes like a tavern revel:

> « Drunken at last, and drowsy, they depart
> Each to his house, adorn'd with labour'd art
> Of the lame architect. The thundering God,
> Even he, withdrew to rest, and had his load;
> His swimming head to needful sleep applied,
> And Juno lay unheeded by his side.»

There is reason indeed to think, that, after the Revolution, Dryden's taste was improved in this, as in some other respects. In his translation of Juvenal, for example, the satire against women, coarse as it is, is considerably refined and softened from the grossness of the Latin poet, who has, however, been lately favoured by a still more elegant, and (excepting perhaps one or two passages) an equally spirited translation, by Mr Gifford of London. Yet, admitting this apology for Dryden as fully as we dare, from the numerous specimens of indelicacy even in his later translations, we are induced to judge it fortunate that Homer was reserved for a poet who had not known the age of Charles II., and whose inaccuracies and injudicious decorations may be pardoned, even by the scholar, when he considers the probability, that Dryden might have slipped into the opposite extreme, by converting rude simplicity into indecency and vulgarity. The Æneid, on the other hand, if it restrained Dryden's poetry

to a correct, steady, and even flight, if it damped his energy by its regularity, and fettered his excursive imagination by the sobriety of its decorum, had the corresponding advantage of holding forth to the translator no temptation to licence, and no apology for negligence. Where the fervency of genius is required, Dryden has usually equalled his original; where peculiar elegance and exact propriety are demanded, his version may be sometimes found flat and inaccurate, but the mastering spirit of Virgil prevails, and it is never disgusting or indelicate. Of all the classical translations we can boast, none is so acceptable to the class of readers, to whom the learned languages are a clasped book and a sealed fountain. And surely it is no moderate praise to say, that a work is universally pleasing to those for whose use it is principally intended, and to whom only it is absolutely indispensible.

The prose of Dryden may rank with the best in the English language. It is no less of his own formation than his versification, is equally spirited, and equally harmonious. Without the lengthened and pedantic sentences of Clarendon, it is dignified where dignity is becoming, and is lively without the accumulation of strained and absurd allusions and metaphors, which were unfortunately mistaken for wit by many of the author's con-

temporaries. Dryden has been accused of unnecessarily larding his style with Gallicisms. It must be owned that, to comply probably with the humour of Charles, or from an affectation of the fashionable court dialect, the poet-laureat employed such words, as *fougue*, *fraîcheur*, etc. instead of the corresponding expressions in English; an affectation which does not appear in our author's later writings. But even the learned and excellent Sir David Dalrymple was led to carry this idea greatly too far. « Nothing,» says that admirable antiquary, « distinguishes the genius of the English language so much as its general naturalization of foreigners. Dryden, in the reign of Charles II., printed the following words as pure French newly imported: *amour, billet-doux, caprice, chagrin, conversation, double-entendre, embarrassed, fatigue, figure, foible, gallant, good graces, grimace, incendiary, levée, maltreated, rallied, repartee, ridicule, tender, tour;* with several others which are now considered as natives.—' Marriage à la Mode.'» [1] But of these words many had been long naturalized in England, and, with the adjectives derived from them, are used by Shakspeare and the dramatists of his age.[2] By their being printed

[1] Poems from the Bannatyne Manuscript, p. 228.

[2] Shakspeare has *capricious*, *conversation*, fatigate (if not *fatigue*), *figure*, *gallant*, *good graces; incendiary* is in Minshew's « Guide to the Tongues,» ed. 1627. *Tender* of-

in italicks in the play of «Marriage à la Mode,» Dryden only meant to mark, that Melantha, the affected coquette in whose mouth they are placed, was to use the *French*, not the vernacular pronunciation. It will admit of question, whether any single French word has been naturalized upon the sole authority of Dryden.

Although Dryden's style has nothing obsolete, we can occasionally trace a reluctance to abandon an old word or idiom; the consequence, doubtless, of his latter studies in ancient poetry. In other respects, nothing can be more elegant than the diction of the praises heaped upon his patrons, for which he might himself plead the apology he uses for Maimbourg, « who, having enemies, made himself friends by panegyrics.» Of these lively critical prefaces, which, when we commence, we can never lay aside till we have finished, Dr Johnson has said, with equal force and beauty, —« They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid;

ten occurs in Shakspeare, both as a substantive and verb. And many other of the above words may be detected by those who have time and inclination to search for them, in authors prior to Dryden's time.

the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little is gay, what is great is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the sprightliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.»

« He, who writes much, will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same*. He does not exhibit a second time the same elegancies in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty, who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features, cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.»

The last paragraph is not to be understood too literally; for although Dryden never so far copied himself as to fall into what has been quaintly called mannerism; yet accurate obser-

vation may trace in his works the repetition of some sentiments and illustrations from prose to verse, and back again to prose.[1] In his preface to the Æneid, he has enlarged on the difficulty of varying phrases, when the same sense returned on the author; and surely we must allow full praise to his fluency and command of language, when, during so long a

[1] The remarkable phrase, « to possess the soul in patience,» occurs in the « Hind and Panther;» and in the Essay on Satire, we have nearly the same expression. The image of a bird's wing flagging in a damp atmosphere, occurs in Don Sebastian, and in prose elsewhere, though I have lost the reference. The same thought is found in the « Hind and Panther,» but is not there used metaphorically:

> Nor need they fear the dampness of the sky
> Should flag their wings and hinder them to fly.

Dryden is ridiculed by an imitator of Rabelais, for the recurrence of the phrase by which he usually prefaces his own defensive criticism. « *If it be allowed me to speak so much in my own commendation;*—see Dryden's preface to his Fables, or any other of his works that you please.» The full title of this whimsical tract, from which Sterne borrowed several hints, is «An Essay towards the theory of the intelligible world intuitively considered. Designed for forty-nine parts. Part Third, consisting of a preface, a postscript, and a little something between, by Gabriel Johnson; enriched by a faithful account of his ideal voyages, and illustrated with poems by several hands, as likewise with other strange things not insufferably clever, nor furiously to the purpose; printed in the year 17, etc.»

literary career, and in the course of such a variety of miscellaneous productions, we can detect in his style so few instances of repetition, or self-imitation.

The prose of Dryden, excepting his translations, and one or two controversial tracts, is entirely dedicated to criticism, either general and didactic, or defensive and exculpatory. There, as in other branches of polite learning, it was his lot to be a light to his people. About the time of the Restoration, the cultivation of letters was prosecuted in France with some energy. But the genius of that lively nation being more fitted for criticism than poetry; for drawing rules from what others have done, than for writing works which might be themselves standards; they were sooner able to produce an accurate table of laws for those intending to write epic poems and tragedies, according to the best Greek and Roman authorities, than to exhibit distinguished specimens of success in either department; just as they are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. When criticism becomes a pursuit separate from poetry, those who follow it are apt to forget, that the legitimate ends of the art for which they lay down rules, are instruction or delight, and that these points being attained, by what road soever, entitles a poet

to claim the prize of successful merit. Neither did the learned authors of these disquisitions sufficiently attend to the general disposition of mankind, which cannot be contented even with the happiest imitations of former excellence, but demands novelty as a necessary ingredient for amusement. To insist that every epic poem shall have the plan of the Iliad and Æneid, and every tragedy be fettered by the rules of Aristotle, resembles the principle of an architect, who should build all his houses with the same number of windows, and of stories. It happened, too, inevitably, that the critics, in the plenipotential authority which they exercised, often assumed as indispensible requisites of the drama, or epopeia, circumstances, which, in the great authorities they quoted, were altogether accidental and indifferent. These they erected into laws, and handed down as essentials to be observed by all succeeding poets; although the forms prescribed have often as little to do with the merit and success of the originals from which they are taken, as the shape of the drinking-glass with the flavour of the wine which it contains. « To these encroachments, » says Fielding, after some observations to the same purpose, « time and ignorance, the two great supporters of imposture, gave authority; and thus many rules for good writing have been established, which have not the least founda-

tion in truth or nature; and which commonly serve for no other purpose than to curb and restrain genius, in the same manner as it would have restrained the dancing-master, had the many excellent treatises on that art laid it down as an essential rule, that every man must dance in chains.»[1] It is probable, that the tyranny of the French critics, fashionable as the literature of that country was with Charles and his courtiers, would have extended itself over England at the Restoration, had not a champion so powerful as Dryden placed himself in the gap. We have mentioned in its place his «Essay on Dramatic Poetry,» the first systematic piece of criticism which our literature has to exhibit. In this Essay, he was accused of entertaining private views, of defending some of his own pieces, at least of opening the door of the theatre wider, and rendering its access more easy, for his own selfish convenience. Allowing this to be true in whole, as it may be in part, we are as much obliged to Dryden for resisting the domination of Gallic criticism, as we are to the fanatics who repressed the despotism of the crown, although they buckled on their armour against white surplices, and the cross in baptism. The character which Dryden has drawn of our English dramatists in the Essay, and the various prefaces connect-

[1] Introduction to Book Fifth of «Tom Jones.»

ed with it, have unequalled spirit and precision. The contrast of Ben Jonson with Shakspeare is peculiarly and strikingly felicitous. Of the latter portrait, Dr Johnson has said, that the editors and admirers of Shakspeare, in all their emulation of reverence, cannot boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value, though of greater bulk. While Dryden examined, discussed, admitted, or rejected the rules proposed by others, he forbore, from prudence, indolence, or a regard for the freedom of Parnassus, to erect himself into a legislator. His doctrines, which chiefly respect the intrinsic qualities necessary in poetry, are scattered, without system or pretence to it, over the numerous pages of prefatory and didactic essays, with which he enriched his publications. It is impossible to read far in any of them, without finding some maxim for doing or forbearing, which every student of poetry will do well to engrave upon the tablets of his memory. But the author's mode of instruction is neither harsh, nor dictatorial. When his opinion changed, as in the case of rhyming tragedies, he avows the change with candour, and we are enabled the more courageously to follow his guidance, when we perceive the readiness with which he retraces his path, if

he strays into error. The gleams of philosophical spirit which so frequently illumine these pages of criticism; the lively and appropriate grace of illustration; the true and correct expression of the general propositions; the simple and unaffected passages, in which, when led to allude to his personal labours and situation, he mingles the feelings of the man with the instructions of the critic,—unite to render Dryden's Essays the most delightful prose in the English language.

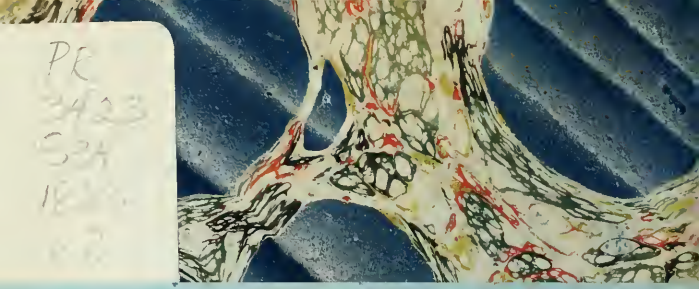
The didactic criticism of Dryden is necessarily, at least naturally, mingled with that which he was obliged to pour forth in his own defence; and this may be one main cause of its irregular and miscellaneous form. What might otherwise have resembled the extended and elevated front of a regular palace, is deformed by barriers, ramparts, and bastions of defence; by cottages, mean additions, and offices necessary for personal accommodation. The poet, always most in earnest about his immediate task, used, without ceremony, those arguments which suited his present purpose, and thereby sometimes supplied his foes with weapons to assail another quarter. It also happens frequently, if the same allusion may be continued, that Dryden defends with obstinate despair, against the assaults of his foemen, a post which, in his cooler moments, he has condemned as untenable. However

easily he may yield to internal conviction, and to the progress of his own improving taste, even these concessions, he sedulously informs us, are not wrung from him by the assault of his enemies; and he often goes out of his road to show that, though conscious he was in the wrong, he did not stand legally convicted by their arguments. To the chequered and inconsistent appearance which these circumstances have given to the criticism of Dryden, it is an additional objection, that through the same cause his studies were partial, temporary, and irregular. His mind was amply stored with acquired knowledge, much of it perhaps the fruits of early reading and application. But, while engaged in the hurry of composition, or overcome by the lassitude of continued literary labour, he seems frequently to have trusted to the tenacity of his memory, and so drawn upon this fund with injudicious liberality, without being sufficiently anxious as to accuracy of quotation, or even of assertion. If, on the other hand, he felt himself obliged to resort to more profound learning than his own, he was at little pains to arrange or digest it, or even to examine minutely the information he acquired from hasty perusal of the books he consulted; and thus but too often poured it forth in the crude form in which he had himself received it, from the French critic, or Dutch schoolman. The scho-

larship, for example, displayed in the Essay on Satire, has this raw and ill-arranged appearrance; and stuck, as it awkwardly is, among some of Dryden's own beautiful and original writing, gives, like a borrowed and unbecoming garment, a mean and inconsistent appearance to the whole disquisition. But these occasional imperfections and inaccuracies are marks of the haste with which Dryden was compelled to give his productions to the world, and cannot deprive him of the praise due to the earliest and most entertaining of English critics.

I have thus detailed the life, and offered some remarks on the literary character, of JOHN DRYDEN: who, educated in a pedantic taste, and a fanatical religion, was destined, if not to give laws to the stage of England, at least to defend its liberties; to improve burlesque into satire: to free translation from the fetters of verbal metaphrase, and exclude from it the licence of paraphrase; to teach posterity the powerful and varied poetical harmony of which their language was capable; to give an example of the lyric ode of unapproached excellence; and to leave to English literature a name, second only to those of Milton and of Shakspeare.

THE END.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